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NOVEMBER 2015 MOTORTREND.COM

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NOVEMBER 2015 VOL. 67, NO. 11



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The 2015 Silverado 1500 was named "Highest Ranked Large Light Duty Pickup in Initial Quality" by J.D. Power³ and the new 2016 Silverado comes from the same stock. The new face of strong, Silverado has a muscular front end that reflects its strength and capability. We sat down with the team of designers and engineers behind the new Silverado, the latest addition to the family of the most dependable, longest-lasting full-size pickups on the road.⁴





JOHN CAFARO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
GLOBAL CHEVROLET DESIGN

This Silverado makes some great advances using new lighting technology. How did this technology inspire the vehicle design?

Lamps are the windows to a truck's soul. They help give a truck its signature look—both during the day and at night. The new LED lamps on the 2016 Silverado gave us the opportunity to create a stronger, more expressive front end while giving our drivers substantial improvement in night driving and overall visibility. It highlights how much technology is in the truck.

Truck design is one of the hottest areas in automotive design right now. What are some of the synergies between truck and other vehicle design?

Corvette and Silverado have been the iconic bookends for Chevrolet design for more than 50 years. In the past, they had completely separate design teams. We now have a lot more cross-pollination in our design teams and design work. You can see that influence especially in the hood and grille. These trim details allow customers to express personality. Grilles are like cowboy boots—they are your calling card.

**“Grilles are like cowboy boots –
they are your calling card.”**

John Cafaro

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GLOBAL CHEVROLET DESIGN



TIMOTHY ASOKLIS

CHEVROLET CHIEF ENGINEER – 2016 FULL-SIZE TRUCK,
CURRENT PRODUCT SUPPORT

The new Silverado was engineered with multiple enhancements, including articulating running boards. How do they work?

A new feature on Silverado, available articulating running boards automatically extend down and out from the side of the cab to act like traditional steps. No competitor offers this feature. Just tap the foot control and they articulate rearward for access to the bed and its contents.

Towing is important in a truck. What advances set the 2016 Silverado apart when it comes to towing capability?

Throttle progression and grade braking are features that have come from our engineers studying the challenges

of pickup truck towing in the real world. Throttle progression, along with our available 8-speed automatic transmission, makes accelerating with a heavy tow load both smooth and quick.

Using intelligent and adaptive algorithms, steep hills are more easily handled with Grade Braking Mode, which transfers some of the burden of slowing down and stopping from the brake pads to the engine and transmission.



1 Requires Silverado 1500 LTZ 2WD 4-door Double Cab Standard Box or Crew Cab Short Box with available 6.2L V8 engine and Max Trailering Package. Class is half-ton full-size pickups. Before you buy a vehicle or use it for trailering, carefully review the Trailering section of the Owner's Manual. The weight of passengers, cargo and options or accessories may reduce the amount you can tow. 2 Requires compatible mobile device, active OnStar service and data plan. Visit onstar.com for details and system limitations. 3 The Chevrolet Silverado LD received the lowest number of problems per 100 vehicles among large light duty pickups in the proprietary J.D. Power 2015 Initial Quality Study. Study based on responses from 84,367 new-vehicle owners, measuring 244 models and measures opinions after 90 days of ownership. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of owners surveyed in February–May 2015. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com. 4 Dependability based on longevity: 1987–April 2013 full-size pickup registrations.



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BEST DRIVER'S CAR



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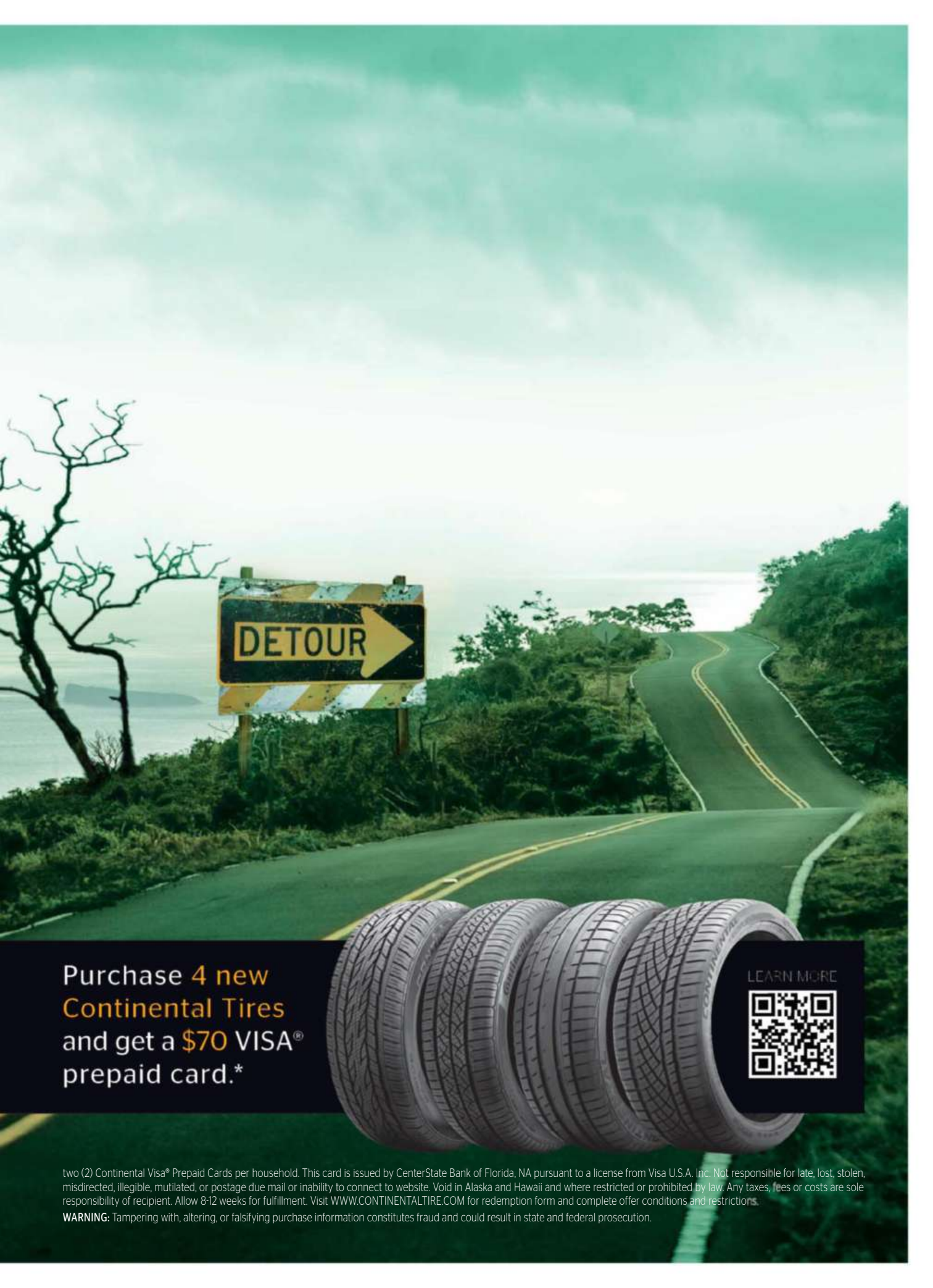
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GARAGE



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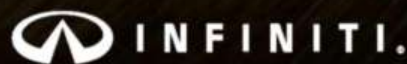
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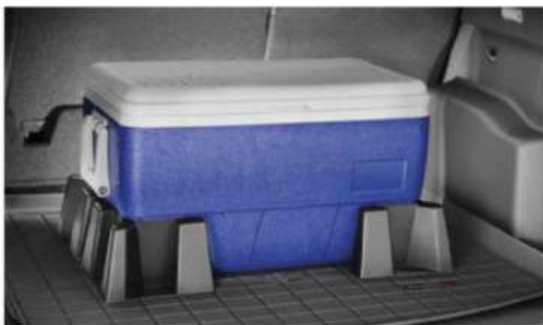
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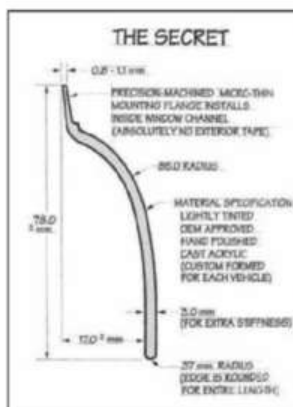
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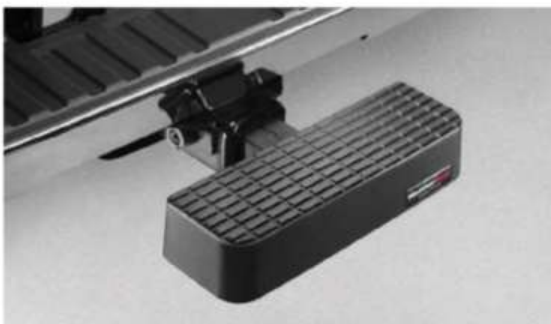
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The Lohdown

In It to Win It



Every auto manufacturer that agreed to participate in this year's Best Driver's Car competition sent at least one spare set of wheels and tires, as we requested.

Porsche also sent a factory-trained technician, additional sets of mounted tires, and the most badass rolling tool chest I have ever seen, the same collection of sockets, Allen wrenches, spare parts, and fluids assembled to support the U.S. launch of the 918 Spyder. This time Porsche Cars North America sent the 500-pound toolbox in support of the Cayman GT4 the company had specially shipped over from Germany just in time for our cover story.

As backup for the Corvette Z06 and AMG GT, Chevrolet and Mercedes-Benz each sent two technicians and a van full of spare tires, tools, and parts. Both also had local dealerships on speed dial. Cadillac had access to similar manpower and sent an extra ATS-V, just in case we wanted to sample the performance of the eight-speed automatic.

But let me be clear: I tell you this not because I want future BDC participants to send full crews and extra cars; we actually prefer car manufacturers simply send a completely stock competitor with one extra set of tires. I tell you this because I want to call attention to how serious high-performance car manufacturers take high-performance car competitions seriously.

We begin planning our next BDC program at the conclusion of the current one by doing postmortems on what went right and wrong. Inquiries into vehicle availability are made

months before the actual invitations go out. The venue is also secured months in advance, because our event takes place at the start of Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca's busy summer season. We file for permits, hire off-duty CHP officers, and arrange for street signs to alert locals of the coming Route 198 closure. We hire extra video producers, a sound guy, and all the gear to support them. We rent walkie-talkies, portable strobe lights, and a couple of Porta-Potties. We hit Costco for pallets of water and snacks and schedule a visit by Tacos La Potranca De Jalisco, King City, California's best taqueria. Then we make the necessary family arrangements with significant others and pets for the five long days we will be away.

We take all our comparison tests seriously, and Best Driver's Car is one of the biggest we do, so it's immensely gratifying when the manufacturers we invite show the same level of commitment and professionalism. Conversely, it's extremely disappointing when they flake out on just the promise of showing up.

Nobody likes to lose, especially the teams behind the fastest, highest-performance cars in the business. But there can be only one Best Driver's Car. Which is why

I'd like to thank the folks at Bentley, Cadillac, Chevrolet/Corvette, Lexus, Mazda, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, and Volkswagen for showing what their brands are made of. To the seven manufacturers who did not win, I have no gold stars or participation trophies for you, just the gratitude of my staff and readership for your part in making our competition truly about finding the Best Driver's Car. ■

Serious high-performance car manufacturers take high-performance car competitions seriously.



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THIS MONTH'S HOT METAL

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GEAR, FACTS, INFO

Hyundai Vision G Concept



Hyundai pulled the covers off a new, pillarless full-size coupe at the Los

Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in August. It's based on the second-generation Genesis sedan platform, and Hyundai hopes the new Vision G Concept will give customers the size, visual impact, and accoutrements of a Mercedes-Benz S-Class Coupe without the nosebleed price and associated badge snobbery.



odd pieces of flair. The biggest I simply could not swallow were the door handles, which are not in fact on the doors. I asked, and the reason why is that when you have doors more than 3 feet in length, you have to take a few steps back while opening them in a conventional fashion. With the handle on the body panel behind the door, you simply push (or in this case swipe), wait as the automatic door opens, and then step inside. Call me old-fashioned, but it seems to me that if you're a door handle, job one is to be on the door.



As for the rest of the exterior, the hard side view of the greenhouse with the windows down is excellent. Of course, that's the magic of coupes without B-pillars. They look fabulous. However, when viewing from the front or the rear, you notice that there's not enough glass. The

IDENTITY Whatever the production name might be, this big V-6/V-8-powered, RWD/AWD coupe is just arrogant enough and should have no trouble finding customers.

Given Hyundai's history of success in the low-cost luxury segment, there are not many good reasons to think that a production Vision G will fall flat on its face. Hyundai designer Chris Chapman told the gathered press that the key word used while working on the Vision G was "chivalry." An odd word to work a car's design around—and since they showed the car at LACMA, I'm going to posit the use of "chivalry" as further proof that artists should never be allowed to title their pieces—the idea is that the Vision G is a full-spec luxury car that's respectful of others. The unspoken implication being that big coupes such as the S-Class are middle fingers in your face.

As for the design itself, I'm not in love with it. It's bold, brash even. But there are too many





“Everyone should drive the Wrangler.”



THEY SAY P32 INTERVIEW

MICHAEL MANLEY, PRESIDENT & CEO, JEEP

relatively small windows make those views bunkerish: tight and confined, not vast and expansive. To my eyes, the next best angle is the front end, with its strong pewter-looking chainmail grille and decorative headlights. The weakest part (aside from the misplaced door handles) is the rear end. The creases in the trunk are just odd, and the taillights look like a Jaguar XJ when viewed from the side and a Cadillac ATS when seen from the rear. The interior is good but far too slavishly copying the S-Class.

The major issue I see with the Vision G is what to call it. Vision G is a pretty whatever, if not generic, name. Vision Coupe? Genesis Vision? Something else entirely? **Jonny Lieberman**

YOUR SAY P34

READERS TALK BACK

PURLOIN The drilled-out Lexicon speaker grilles and dual flat-panel digital displays look like the Chinese theft school of design rather than something new, exciting, and different.



FIRST LOOK



The key word used while working on the Vision G was “chivalry.”



Intake

Flagship SUV Gets an Extreme Makeover



UNCHANGED The 2016 Lexus LX 570 will keep its legendary off-road capability, high-quality leather, and four-zone climate control.

2016 Lexus LX 570



The last time Lexus put the flagship LX under the knife, aside from a mild refresh in 2012, a second LF-A concept was on the auto show circuit and Lexus had just confirmed the hot rod IS F. In 2007 the future of Lexus was looking pretty grand. Eight years later, Lexus introduces a serious round of changes for the LX 570, and we're talking more than skin deep. The LX has come out totally transformed.

Under the hood, the 5.7-liter V-8 carries over but is now paired

with an eight-speed automatic instead of the previous six-speed. The new tranny introduces Drive Mode Select, which allows the driver to adjust powertrain and suspension response on the fly. Like in other Lexus products with Drive Mode Select, settings range from Comfort to Sport S+. Of course Lexus suggests that the LX 570, with its 7,000-pound towing capacity, would be a great tow vehicle for many of the trailered classics at the Pebble Beach show.

Performance with the new eight-speed has improved; the

LX 570 has a 13/18 mpg city/highway rating from the EPA (up from 12/17 mpg), and Lexus claims a 0.2-second improvement in 0-60 mph and quarter-mile times over the six-speed model. (The last LX 570 we tested took 7.0 and 15.4 seconds, respectively.) We're betting the big three-row will be more responsive in the real world with those extra gear ratios.

The exterior changes are more than just a set of new clothes, as the LX 570 ties together the front end with a single-piece spindle grille and LEDs for all the major light-producing elements (headlights/turn signals/foglights). Out back, the changes are more revisionary, as restyled taillights join the new rear fascia. New 20- and 21-inch wheel designs are also available.

Inside, you'll appreciate a host of new safety and luxury features. A new three-spoke, wood-trimmed steering wheel frames the larger 4.2-inch multi-information display, and the latest infotainment system is now displayed on a massive 12.3-inch screen.

Luxury takes a big step up with the mantra "More is More" playing a big part. Four new

wood trims are available (Matte Walnut, Linear Dark Mocha, Linear Espresso, and Dark Brown Walnut), LED lighting takes over the illumination duty for the cabin and cargo area, and overhead lights replace buttons with touch sensors. Second-row outboard seats are now available with manual sunshades and ventilation.

Safety features become standard for 2016, as well, with the Lexus Safety System + combining a pre-collision system with pedestrian detection, a lane departure alert, intelligent high-beam assist, and a dynamic radar cruise control system with full stop/restart ability. The optional head-up display, new for 2016, straddles the line between safety equipment and comfort but is one feature we're looking forward to no matter how it's categorized. The nifty monitor can display dynamic radar cruise control information, vehicle speed, and parking assistance instructions, among other things.

The changes, which don't diminish the traditional values of the biggest Lexus, should help keep the three-row relevant.

Austin Lott



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Intake

BMW Concept M4 GTS One-Off Model Could Clock in at 444 HP



BMW M GmbH revealed the BMW Concept M4 GTS as part of Monterey Car Week. Built for street and track use, the special production model will be the first of its kind offered in the U.S.

Concept car features that will make it over to production models later this year include water injection and OLED (organic light-emitting diode) taillights. The water-injection system, used in the BMW M4 MotoGP Safety Car, allows the engine to run

more turbocharger boost pressure for more overall engine horsepower and torque. A fine mist of water injected into the intake plenums absorbs heat to significantly cool the intake air, reducing the chance of engine knock. Power figures have yet to be revealed, but we've heard as much as 444 hp is possible—up 19 hp from a stock M4.

Other BMW Concept M4 GTS bits include a manually adjustable front splitter and rear wing constructed from exposed carbon fiber. The add-ons are said to aid aerodynamic balance on the road

and track. A larger front air intake increases airflow and reduces front axle lift. Additionally, the concept features a CFRP (carbon-fiber-reinforced plastic) hood to lower the center of gravity and overall weight.

The BMW Concept M4 GTS is finished in Frozen Dark Gray Metallic paint with a contrasting Acid Orange accent on the front splitter. A set of 9.5-by-19-inch front and 10.5-by-20-inch rear wheels feature a matching Acid Orange accent. The wheels are wrapped in Michelin Sport Cup 2 tires size 265/35 R19 front and 285/30 R20 rear. **Jason Udy**

LIGHT AND FLOWING The lightweight hood features a big vent to keep the more powerful motor cool.



MIKE CONNOR

MTCONFIDENTIAL

Cadillac Escalade-V:

It's happening. Seems like it ought to have happened a long time ago given how many other brutally powerful luxury SUVs already exist, but better late than never. Expect the CTS-V's LT4 supercharged V-8 engine and eight-speed automatic, tuned for the (much) heavier application. Still, well over 600 hp and 600 lb-ft should be on the table. We'd guess it'll ride lower and wear wider, stickier tires, too. Oh, and that whole "there will be either a Platinum or V edition of a Cadillac but never both" thing? Well, money talks louder, apparently...Speaking of **massively powerful supercharged engines**, word is going around about a supercharged version of the Viper. Details are light, but it's likely a response to it being outgunned by the Hellcats. That and Vipers aren't selling at nearly the rate Dodge predicted, so they've gotta do something to get people's attention...On the other end of the spectrum, it seems **Mercedes-Benz is ready to show its 3.0-liter, turbodiesel V-6 again.**

Next stop is the GLE-Class SUV (last seen as the 2014 ML350 Bluetec), then likely on to the rest of the lineup. It's unclear whether this will replace or complement the existing four-cylinder diesel model, but we hope it's the latter...On the topic of luxury cars, we've got it on good authority that **Hyundai's new Vision G concept car is a thinly veiled preview of the next Equus**, which we recently spotted testing in the desert. It's a lot closer than you think, slated to debut next April at the New York auto show. Whether or not Hyundai will do a coupe version like the Vision G remains to be seen, but we wouldn't bet against it.

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1. Claim based on average horsepower from Lexus IS line year over year vs. 2016 Lexus IS line. 2. Ratings achieved using the required premium unleaded gasoline with an octane rating of 91 or higher. If premium fuel is not used, performance will decrease. 3. Performance figures are for comparison only and were obtained with prototype vehicles by professional drivers using special safety equipment and procedures. Do not attempt. 4. Claim based on 6.6-second 0-to-60 time of the 2016 Lexus IS 200t vs. 7.7-second 0-to-60 time of the 2015 Lexus IS 250. 5. Base model comparison of 255 horsepower for the 2016 Lexus IS 300 AWD vs. 204 horsepower for the 2015 Lexus IS 250 AWD. ©2015 Lexus.

We Say...



Ron Kiino
THE KIINOTE

Blasts From the Past

A Speedy Stroll Down Memory Lane



One of my favorite parts of Best Driver's Car—apart from driving the dizzying array of sexy sheet-metal up and down Highway 198, arguing with Jonny Lieberman about whether the Caddy CTS-V is superior to the Bentley GT3-R (it is), and sipping Brian Vance's freshly brewed coffee at 6 a.m. in a fogged-in garage at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca—is standing next to pit wall, iPhone stopwatch in hand, timing each contender as it whizzes by at triple-digit clips down the front straight. Over the years, I've gotten so adept—my fingertip in near harmony with the data gleaned from Kim Reynolds' VBox GPS machine—that Scott Evans has nicknamed my iPhone RonBox. Within moments of my tapping the screen and reading aloud the time, my fellow editors race to their smartphones to find comparable times from previous years' contenders. Oohs and aahs ensue over the separation of a couple tenths or a few hundredths—essentially blinks of an eye. But what an eye-opening story a blink or two can tell.

The all-new Mazda Miata circled its home track in 1:50.68. Not bad for 155 hp. Would you believe the little MX-5 was only 0.26 slower than the 232-hp 2009 Mazda RX-8 R3 we lapped for our "America's Best-Handling Car" story (the BDC precursor)? Believe it. Down 77 horses (oh, no), the Miata is also down 760 pounds (oh, yes), so its negligible deficiency in torque (148 lb-ft vs. 159) and smaller contact patches (205/45R17 vs. 225/40R19) didn't hinder it much around Laguna's 11 corners. In fact, the MX-5's peak speed (103.4 mph) wasn't far off the RX-8's (104.8), and its peak lateral acceleration (1.48 g) virtually matched that of its big brother (1.49 g).

Cool Fact: Through Turn 5, the Miata outgrips the RX-8 (1.26 g vs. 1.14), helping it carry 87.5 mph uphill to Turn 6, only 0.2 mph shy of the RX-8.

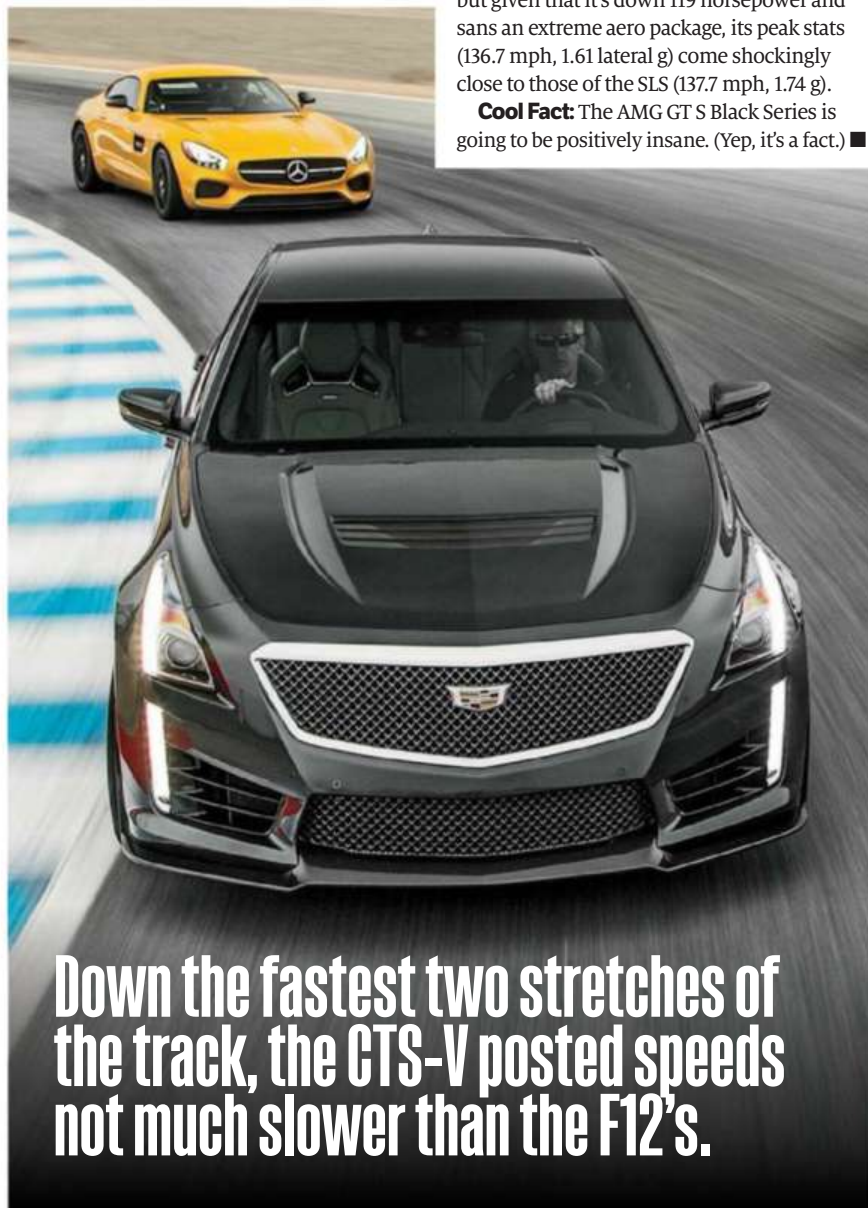
Had we a time machine and threw the new Cadillac CTS-V in our December 2013 cover story with the Porsche 911 C4S (the 2013 BDC champ), Ferrari F12, and C7 Corvette Z51, it would have posted the third-fastest lap time at 1:38.52. Exactly 0.48 second behind, the Porsche would've been trying to catch up, and just 0.24 ahead, the 'Vette's rearview would have been filled with the CTS' grille. More astounding: The Cadillac was only 0.48 behind the pack-leading 731-horse Ferrari.

Sure, the CTS has a 640-horse version of the Z06's supercharged V-8, but this is a four-door luxury sedan, not the most powerful front-engine Berlinetta to come out of Maranello. Down the fastest two stretches of the track, the CTS-V clocked speeds not much slower than the F12's (133.0 and 120.2 mph vs. 134.0 and 126.2, respectively), yet it displayed stronger braking power entering each turn (1.10 g vs. 1.00 for Turn 1, 1.62 g vs. 1.32 for Turn 5).

Cool Fact: The CTS-V holds five people, and the F12's price tag holds five CTS-Vs.

The AMG GT S is amazing. That a 503-horsepower rear-drive coupe is quicker around MRLS than the all-wheel-drive (and more powerful) 560-horse Porsche 911 Turbo S is grounds for a good headshake. But what put me into headshake overdrive is the fact that the "midlevel" GT S, soon to be superseded by more potent variants, is nearly on par with the SLS AMG Black Series, the same 622-horse, carbon-fiber-infused, aero-flicked race-car-for-the-road gullwing rocket that orbited MRLS in 1:35.03. At 1:35.57, the GT S is a fair distance aft, but given that it's down 119 horsepower and sans an extreme aero package, its peak stats (136.7 mph, 1.61 lateral g) come shockingly close to those of the SLS (137.7 mph, 1.74 g).

Cool Fact: The AMG GT S Black Series is going to be positively insane. (Yep, it's a fact.) ■



Down the fastest two stretches of the track, the CTS-V posted speeds not much slower than the F12's.

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We Say...



Frank Markus
TECHNOLOGUE

Sit. Stay. Good Passenger. You've been transporting your pooch all wrong



I've never had children, but two years ago we adopted a rescue beagle/schnauzer mix that quickly became the center of our universe. She goes with us everywhere we can take her, and on car journeys she's always either in a tethered safety harness or (for longer trips) in the wire cage she sleeps in. Well, according to crash tests recently conducted by the Center for Pet Safety (with Subaru sponsorship), we're being as reckless transporting Snickers as my parents were when they allowed me to free-roam the station wagon interior. Our restraints only prevent her from distracting us.

Just as there wasn't much child-restraint safety research available to inform my parents, the CPS only began pioneering pet crash-safety testing in 2011. That first pet-harness test was designed using the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213 for child-restraint systems as its guideline, and it determined that none—not one—of the four brands tested managed to safely restrain a 55-pound test dummy dog, with most indicating "Extremely low likelihood of survivability for the animal and danger to humans when the dog becomes a missile." The industry took heed, and in 2013 when

the CPS partnered with Subaru for its second round of harness testing, the results were better. Four brands failed a static load test, but another seven survived and advanced to the dynamic sled crash-test phase. Those results clearly indicated that tether devices intended to give the dog a bit more range of motion are all catastrophically unsafe, allowing the dog to become a projectile, endangering human passengers and risking severe pet injury. Only the Sleepypod Clickit Utility harness (\$90), which attaches directly to the lap and shoulder belt with auxiliary side straps mounted to the vehicle's LATCH child-seat hooks, safely restrained the dog test dummy (earning CPS's first 5 Star Crash Test Rating).

In July, the CPS tested crates and carriers, and the news was even worse for Snickers' wire sleep cage travel solution. The bent hooks and crimped loops that allow such cages to fold up for easy carrying come

undone at the moment of impact, sending the dog flying. Similarly, soft-sided pet carriers should only be considered for use on the floor, up against the front seat for safety, and CPS does not recommend using pet booster seats, as it has yet to rigorously test these products.

Of the four proper travel cages tested this year, only one managed to stay attached to the simulated cargo area and fully retain the dummy dog with a door that still opened easily. That was the Gunner Kennel G1 (\$485). Two pet travel carriers tested in July also achieve Top Performer ratings: the Sleepypod Mobile Pet Bed with PPRS Handilock (\$160-\$180) and the Pet Ego Jet Set Forma Frame Carrier (\$100).

These are early days for pet-safety testing. CPS founder/CEO Lindsey A. Wolko commissioned construction of the dog crash-test dummies and even fitted some with accelerometers, leaning on NASA research for survivability thresholds, but there is a desperate lack of real-world pet injury

These are early days for pet-safety testing, and there is a desperate lack of pet injury data.



SAFETY CELLS Snickers (above left) and boyfriend Alvin preferred Sleepypod Clickit harnesses to this 50-pound Gunner Kennel G1. Her Sport model was easier to attach than his Utility model.

accident data. She says that no national organization currently records pet accident injury/mortality data and that pet-insurance providers that might have access to some such data consider it proprietary (perhaps because they're affiliated with the industry producing the products that could be negatively implicated by the data). Wolko says the CPS is the world's only nonprofit consumer advocacy organization working to establish safety standards for pet products. To date, the harness, cage, and carriers mentioned above are the only products that have earned CPS Top Performer certification, but hopefully with our help and that of Subaru (69 percent of its owners have pets!) publicizing the CPS' efforts, the pet-products industry will begin collaborating, sharing information, and making all our furry friends safer. ■

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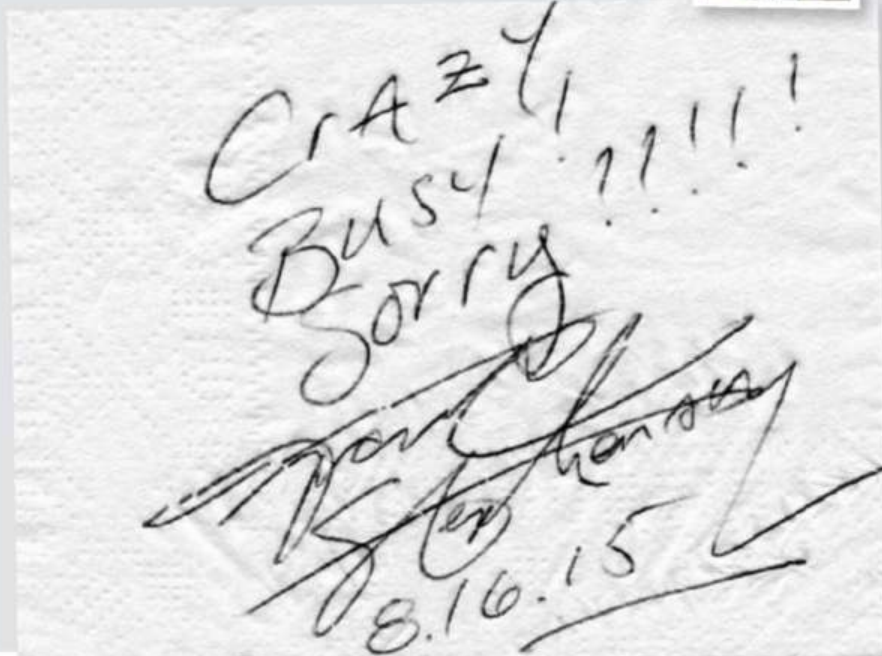
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BACK OF THE NAPKIN

FRANK STEPHENSON, DESIGN CHIEF, MCLAREN

The gregarious Frank Stephenson is responsible for all the gorgeous cars in McLaren's current lineup plus other legends: the 2002 Mini Cooper, original BMW X5, and Ferrari F430. We asked him to sketch us something at Pebble Beach then waited two hours as he was mobbed by hundreds of his closest friends.



From the *Motor Trend* Archive...

REARVIEW



50

NOVEMBER 1965

PRICE: \$0.50

This was our "Special Buyer's Guide" issue for 1965. Our fashionable gold

cover touted the complete reports for every 1966 car, including driving reports, full specs and engine data, and a breakdown of prices and options. We also road tested the 1966 Avanti II and looked at race results.



30

NOVEMBER 1985

PRICE: \$2.25

To celebrate 100 years of internal-combustion engines in automobiles, Porsche's 944 Turbo and Chevy's Corvette squared off. The issue also featured a gorgeous engineering cutaway of the all-new Mazda RX-7.



10

NOVEMBER 2005

PRICE: \$4.99

It was the beauty versus the beast, with the Aston Martin DB9 "that has Porsche running scared" and "Dodge's best Viper ever" gracing our cover. We also had our 2006 truck buyer's guide and a quartet of V-8 sport sedans.



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They Say

Michael Manley **PRESIDENT & CEO, JEEP**



Numbers don't lie. If Jeep were a standalone brand, it would be the sixth best-selling brand in America behind Honda and before Hyundai. Sales have jumped 20 percent in 2015, putting it on pace to hit 1.2 million sales worldwide. Jeep sold 330,000 vehicles through May, outselling Dodge by 116,000 units and Ram by 135,000 units during the same time period.

Jeep is killing it.

Motor Trend got a chance to talk to Mike Manley, CEO of the Jeep brand (part of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles), to find out what's in store for Jeep enthusiasts and the brand in general. While top executives at FCA continue to rumble about mergers and future business structures, Manley seems more concerned about the products coming out of Jeep.

Jeep is at the beginning of its Renegade worldwide launch. The tiny CUV appears perfectly timed to the growing trend of customers looking for small sport/utilities.

"I'm very pleased with the Renegade launch," Manley said. "It started at above 5 percent segment share in North America."

Additionally, Manley said there is a chance that in the future the Renegade could include an electric powertrain, as long as it does not compromise performance.

As for the consolidation of the Jeep Compass and Patriot, Manley said those two vehicles will become one, though one of the two names could remain when it arrives.

"Why would we spend all of that money to develop two names and then get rid of both of them?" he asked. Whatever the name, the vehicle will fit into the compact category the Compass and Patriot now share.

The Jeep Grand Cherokee will see a refresh next year, but the redesign was pushed back to 2018 or 2019 as Jeep spends more time with the upcoming Grand Wagoneer (arriving as a 2018), which Manley says will be a three-row luxury option meant to take on the likes of BMW, Audi, and Land Rover's large SUVs.

"I like that we have some flexibility in our timing for redesigns," Manley said. "Any product plan continues to change."

Next year will also mark Jeep's 75th Anniversary as a brand and will be noted in the Grand Cherokee's extensive refresh, which Manley says will keep the already

Interview



I'm very pleased with the Renegade launch. It started above 5% segment share in North America."



Jeep Renegade

strong model relevant in the marketplace.

Of course, there's one vehicle Jeep has never announced it would build but grassroots grumblings continue to suggest: a Jeep pickup. Surprisingly, Manley never dismissed the idea. "This is one question we have every single time," he said. "I'm very interested in doing one, a lifestyle pickup that represents the brand and speaks to the owner. I think a pickup in the Jeep brand would be a good addition."

That doesn't mean Jeep will build one, but it also doesn't mean it won't.

A new Wrangler, the most important Jeep in the lineup, will likely arrive around 2018 or 2019. Enthusiasts shouldn't worry about major performance or aesthetic changes.

"It will certainly be an evolution," Manley said. "The Wrangler is the ultimate expression of the brand. I think everyone should drive the Wrangler—it expresses freedom and exploration. Who wouldn't want that?"

Scott Burgess



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Your Say...

READERS' THOUGHTS ON PAST ISSUES

Bated Breath

In aviation mechanics school we learned there are two and only two general ways to increase horsepower:

Increase compression ratio.

Increase breathing.

The Subaru BRZ and Mazda MX-5 engines have identical displacements and four-valve head(s), but the Miata has higher compression with 45 less hp ("Joy Rides," August 2015). Why? Higher revs = better breathing = more hp?

DENNY BELL

Pagosa Springs, Colorado

Generally speaking, the Subie does 45 horsepower's worth of extra breathing and crankshaft gyrating between the Miata's 6,000-rpm redline and its own 7,000-rpm shutoff.—Ed.

Big Test Inquiries

With regards to the Big Test of subcompact CUVs ("Generation Gap," August 2015) why wasn't the best-selling Kia Soul included?

BERNIE DONSKY

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

We see the Soul purely as a passenger car.—Ed.

Strongly Worded Letter Section

As a longtime subscriber to *Motor Trend*, I always look forward to next month's issue and especially enjoy your long-term test/verdict section. I must say, however, that from time to time I find the naïveté or inability of your evaluators to simply state realistic opinions based on fact rather than sugarcoated statements to be of interest.

For instance, in the August 2015 issue, Frank Markus wrote in his long-term verdict of the GMC Sierra Denali 1500 4WD crew cab ("Garage"), "Well, it's not surprising that with more goodies and features, there's more to go wrong." Really? As stated, there were five quality-related functional issues that developed over 17 months and 24,275 miles—a tire-pressure monitoring fault, an overheating exhaust campaign, a transmission-cooler connection campaign, an intermittent infotainment screen blanking reflash, and an unwanted transfer case shift to neutral campaign. All this on a \$54,000-plus vehicle.

Seems to me this result is simply evidence of substandard capability to assure reliability of vehicle components, à la 1970s conditions. I realize that the Toyota Tundra has much lower sales volume than Chevrolet, GMC, or Ford; however, it would be interesting to carry out a long-term test on a comparable Tundra (fully loaded with all the

"goodies and features") and report functional issues that arise, which I imagine would be minimal, if any. Is it the fact of highly optioned "goodies and features" resulting in these issues or insufficient capability to assure quality? Please just be realistic and technically correct.

DAVID MARTIN

Estero, Florida

We'll ask for a long-termer when the next Tundra arrives, but be careful about betting on fewer recalls.—Ed.

I saw several comments from your writers that left me baffled ("Garage," August 2015). First, Brian Vance commented that the Volkswagen GTI's collision warning "once or twice kept me from nearly rear-ending my fellow freeway drivers." Could it be that Brian is tailgating or texting?

Second, Christian Seabaugh claimed that the Audi A3 is the perfect size "so long as I don't have to beat someone off the light." Is Christian drag racing, or is he simply in the wrong lane with a known turn coming up?

Finally, in the Honda Fit review, Erick Ayapana stated that the Fit's 260-270-mile range "could be an annoyance to road trippers." By my calculation, that's 3.5 hours of driving at almost 80 mph. How long can the average person drive without a break? Don't you guys ever stretch your legs or go to the bathroom?

DARYL POLSTER

Via the Internet

The lesson here is to steer clear of Vance and Seabaugh when they're out and about. And being able to drive long distances without stopping is a Motor Trend staffer necessity.—Ed.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Message Not Received

If you are a true car guy [or gal—Ed.], you love all cars regardless of looks, performance, etc. So stop complaining about every detail of any car. My wife of 25 years said the following after seeing the new Lincoln Continental: "I want that. When does it come out?" She is not a car guy in the least. She has never said that about a car before. So Ford has done something right to get that response from a non-car guy.

BRENT WILSON

Via the Internet

Stop complaining? What would become of our livelihood?—Ed.

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READERS ON LOCATION

TRESPASSERS WELCOME "My cousin and travel buddy, Andrew, snapped a picture of me enjoying your magazine while waiting outside a hobbit hole in the Shire," relays reader **Christopher Shamlian** from the Shire, aka Matamata in Kiwi Land, New Zealand. "I wonder if Bilbo likes the look of the 2017 Ford GT?" The not terribly subliminal message here: Support Tolkien tourism.

As I look at the current crop of small, affordable cars, I cannot help but think that when it comes to automotive styling for affordable cars, we are back in the late 1970s.

Let me point out something that most automakers seem to have forgotten: Tall is ugly. Yes, if you're building a utility vehicle and space is a prime concern, then maybe you want something tall. But for people who don't have a lot of cargo to haul around and haven't overpopulated the world with a bunch of kids, I'll say it again. Tall is ugly.

I would say this trend started around 2000 with the introduction of Toyota's Echo. Its four-door "styling" is still one of the most atrocious designs of the 21st century, along with the previous version of the Nissan Versa. Now, this affliction affects small vehicles from almost every manufacturer.

The problem is the automakers are taking their midsize car designs, some actually quite nice, and incorporating the style into their smaller cars. But when shortening the length, they leave the height nearly unchanged, resulting in a car that looks like it belongs in a cartoon.

People are buying these vehicles because they have to, not because they want to. What happened to the sleek styling available in affordable cars in the late 1980s and 1990s? Toyota's own Paseo, the Ford Probe and even Escort of that era, the Nissan Sentra coupe and 240SX, the Honda CRX. Even GM's Chevrolet Cavalier and Pontiac Sunbird were decent-looking cars back then. I cannot see tying up \$25,000 to \$30,000 in a new car and being in debt for a decade. And because most of the affordable cars look like cartoons, the automakers are not doing anything to lure me into their showrooms.

BOB SCHMERLING
Altamonte Springs, Florida

Tall and dorky-looking was alive before the Echo; all hail the Suzuki X-90. —Ed.



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PHILIPS

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DELIVERA



Words *Motor Trend* Editors **Photographs** William Walker, Robert Guio, Robin Trajano



What does it mean to be the best? On the one hand, that's a philosophical, if not rhetorical, question. On the other—and when we're talking about what makes one car rise above its peers in terms of perceived great-to-driveness—we can actually call out some specifics. Before we get into the particulars and finer points, let me attach our standard *Motor Trend* "of the Year" clause. Simply put, we're talking about the best new cars this year. We're not saying that this year's champ is better than last year's.

MOTORTREND
BEST
DRIVER'S
CAR



That might very well be true, but we're not saying that. Not yet, anyway.

Each year, we ask all the manufacturers for their hottest new sporty metal. And we don't discriminate. Hot hatches, performance sedans, muscle cars, sports cars, supercars, hypercars—we don't care. Some OEMs, such as General Motors, always seem to say, "Yes, please beat the snot out of our cars." Other manufacturers—such as, say, Lamborghini—don't. But please trust us. We ask.

Once the cars are in our hot, grubby mitts, the first challenge is to hand them over to our crack testing team

NCE

CHASING PERFECTION UP AND DOWN THE GOLDEN STATE



so they can perform our standard battery of tests. Stuff like 0-60 mph, the quarter mile, 60-0 braking, and our patented figure-eight test. Next, we arrive at Route 198 where our friends at the California Highway Patrol are kind enough to close down a 4.2-mile stretch. For one glorious day, the *Motor Trend* editorial staff treats 198 like our own private hill climb while our poor photo and video teams camp out on the side of the road and sweat.

After that, all the contenders show up at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca where our man (and professional race car driver) Randy Pobst sets a fast lap in each. Once

THE JUDGES

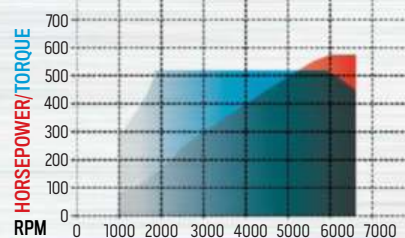
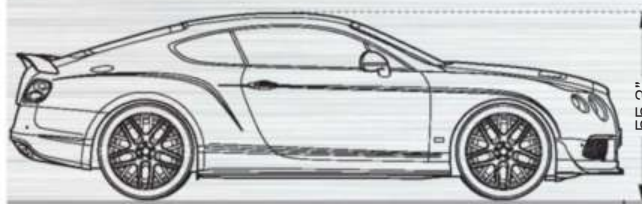
Scott Burgess
Jason Cammisa
Scott Evans
Ron Kiino
Jonny Lieberman
Edward Loh
Angus MacKenzie
Frank Markus
Nate Martinez
Randy Pobst
Chris Walton

we've collected all the various data points, the editorial staff sits down for an oftentimes contentious, sometimes tearful, and always scream- and insult-filled voting session. Thanks to majority rule, one car will be crowned the 2015 *Motor Trend* Best Driver's Car. We're looking for that special car we most love to drive. The one that allows us to achieve our individual limits on the street as well as makes a seasoned pro happy on the racetrack. To a large degree, the winner is also the car that makes us smile the most. As for said winner, make your guesses now.

Jonny Lieberman

THE CONTENDERS...

2015 BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT3-R



3.3 SEC

11.6 SEC @119.8 MPH

107 FT

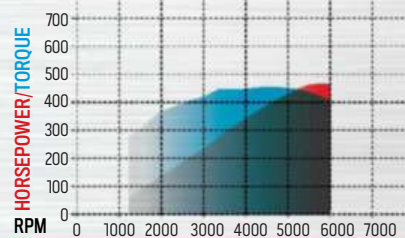
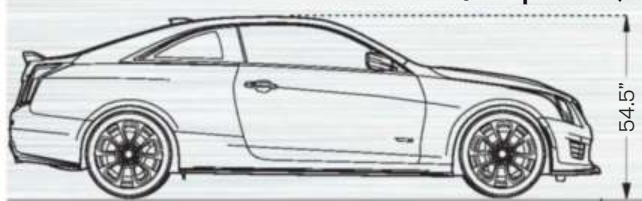
POWER 572 HP @ 6,000 RPM

TORQUE 518 LB-FT @ 1,700 RPM

MT FIGURE EIGHT 24.8 SEC @ 0.81 G AVG

PRICE AS TESTED \$341,025 **DRIVELINE** Front-engine, 4.0L/572-hp/518-lb-ft* twin-turbo DOHC 32-valve V-8, 8A, AWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Control arms, air springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, air springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 16.5-in vented, drilled, carbon-ceramic disc; 14.0-in vented, drilled, carbon-ceramic disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 4,919 lb (58/42%)* 592 hp/553 lb-ft for 15 seconds of overboost

2016 CADILLAC ATS-V (6-sp man; 8-sp auto)



4.2; 3.9 SEC

12.6 SEC; 12.3 SEC
@114.2 MPH @114.9 MPH

101; 101 FT

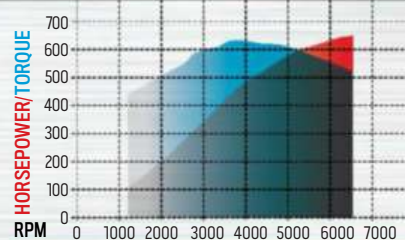
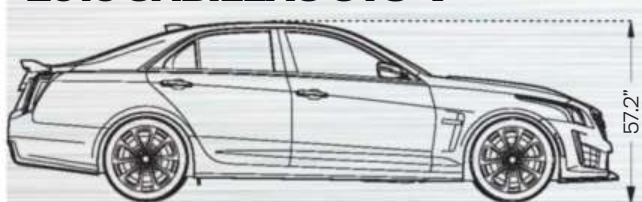
POWER 464 HP @ 5,850 RPM

TORQUE 445 LB-FT @ 3,500 RPM

MT FIGURE EIGHT 23.9 SEC @ 0.86 G AVG
24.3 SEC @ 0.87 G AVG

PRICE AS TESTED \$74,450; \$80,775 **DRIVELINE** Front-engine, 3.6L/464-hp/445-lb-ft* twin-turbo DOHC 24-valve V-6, 6M; 8A, RWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Struts, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 14.5-in vented disc; 13.3-in vented disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 3,754 lb (52/48%); 3,793 lb (53/47%)*SAE certified

2016 CADILLAC CTS-V



3.8 SEC

11.9 SEC @122.0 MPH

99 FT

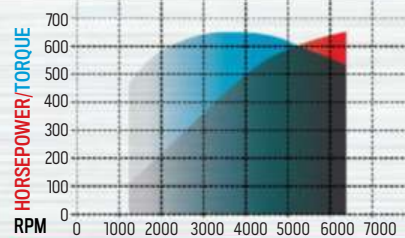
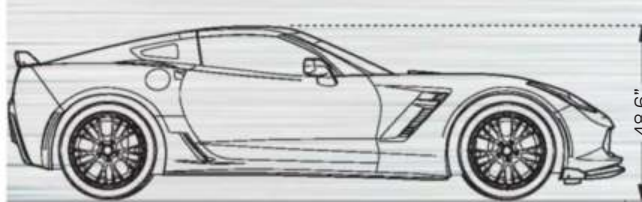
POWER 640 HP @ 6,400 RPM

TORQUE 630 LB-FT @ 3,600 RPM

MT FIGURE EIGHT 24.2 SEC @ 0.88 G AVG

PRICE AS TESTED \$96,585 **DRIVELINE** Front-engine, 6.2L/640-hp/630-lb-ft* supercharged OHV 16-valve V-8, 8A, RWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Struts, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 15.4-in vented disc; 14.4-in vented disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 4,108 lb (53/47%)*SAE certified

2015 CHEVROLET CORVETTE Z06 (Z07 pkg)



3.3 SEC

11.4 SEC @124.4 MPH

91 FT

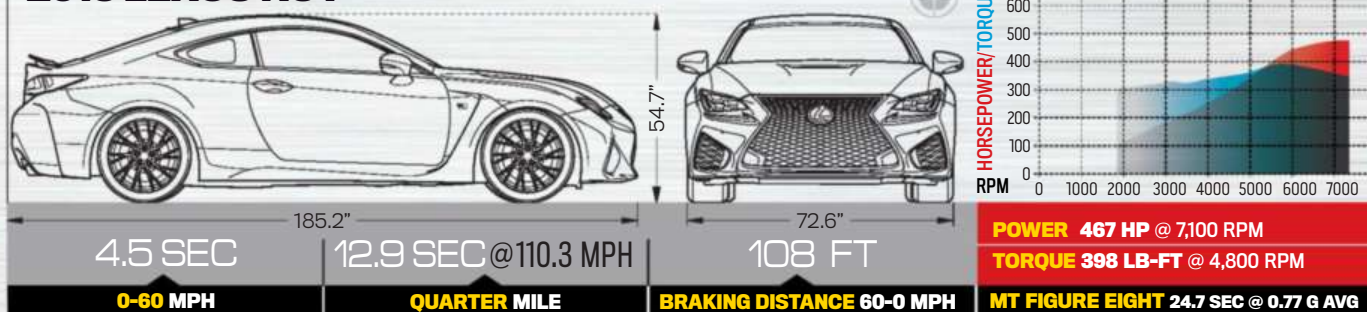
POWER 650 HP @ 6,400 RPM

TORQUE 630 LB-FT @ 3,600 RPM

MT FIGURE EIGHT 22.3 SEC @ 1.06 G AVG

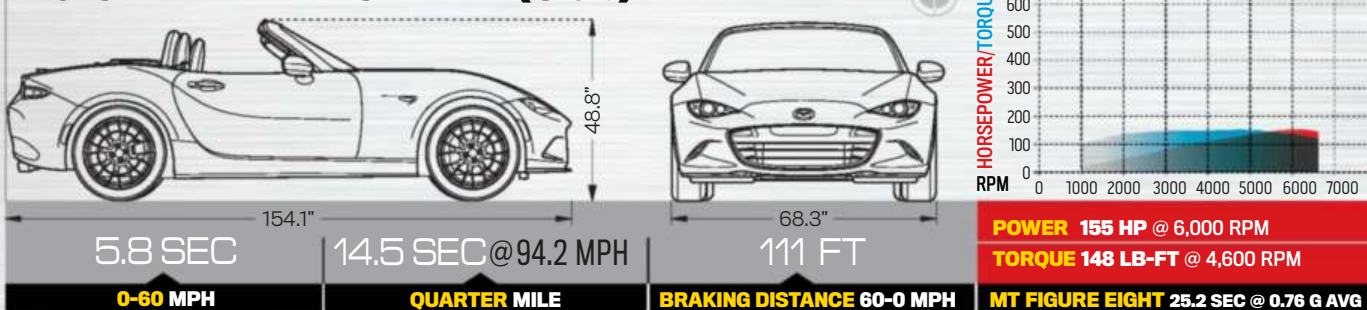
PRICE AS TESTED \$99,745 **DRIVELINE** Front-engine, 6.2L/650-hp/650-lb-ft* supercharged OHV 16-valve V-8, 7M, RWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Control arms, transverse leaf spring, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, transverse leaf spring, adj shocks, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 15.5-in vented, drilled, carbon-ceramic disc; 15.3-in vented, drilled, carbon-ceramic disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 3,527 lb (50/50%)*SAE certified

2015 LEXUS RC F



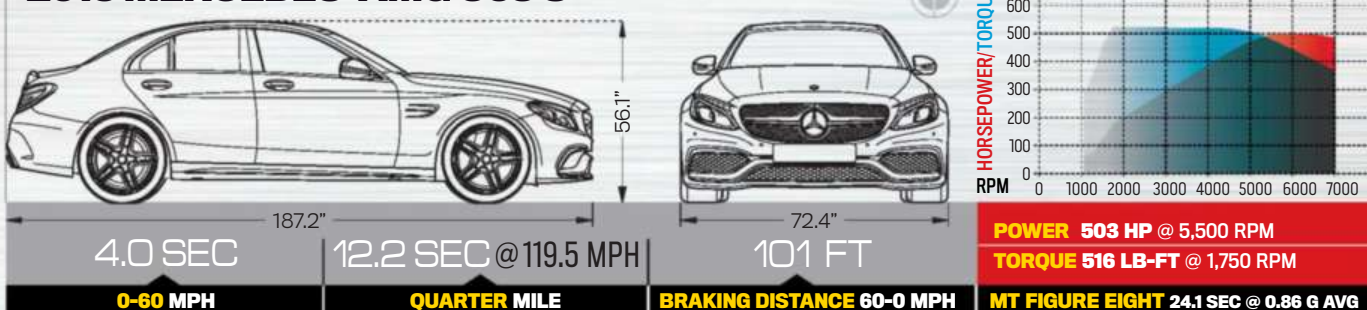
PRICE AS TESTED \$72,970 **DRIVELINE** Front-engine, 5.0L/467-hp/389-lb-ft DOHC 32-valve V-8, 8A, RWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 15.0-in vented disc; 13.6-in vented disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 4,040 lb (53/47%)

2016 MAZDA MX-5 MIATA (Club)



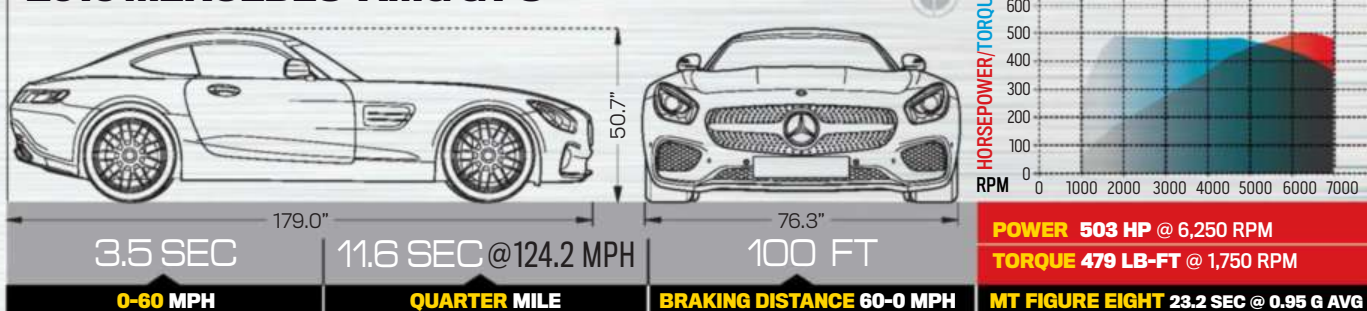
PRICE AS TESTED \$32,950 **DRIVELINE** Front-engine, 2.0L/155-hp/148-lb-ft DOHC 16-valve I-4, 6M, RWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 11.0-in vented disc; 11.0-in disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 2,296 lb (52/48%)

2015 MERCEDES-AMG C63 S



PRICE AS TESTED \$91,585 **DRIVELINE** Front-engine, 4.0L/503-hp/516-lb-ft twin-turbo DOHC 32-valve V-8, 7A, RWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Multilink, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 15.8-in vented, drilled, carbon-ceramic disc; 14.2-in vented disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 3,936 lb (54/46%)

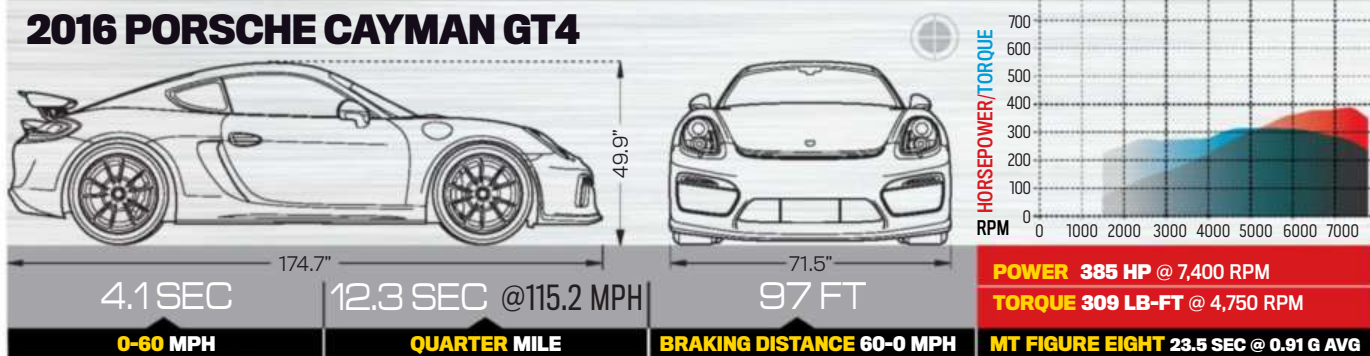
2016 MERCEDES-AMG GT S



PRICE AS TESTED \$171,900 **DRIVELINE** Front-engine, 4.0L/503-hp/479-lb-ft twin-turbo DOHC 32-valve V-8, 7-spd twin-cl auto, RWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Control arms, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 15.8-in vented, drilled, carbon-ceramic disc; 14.2-in vented, drilled, carbon-ceramic disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 3,691 lb (47/53%)

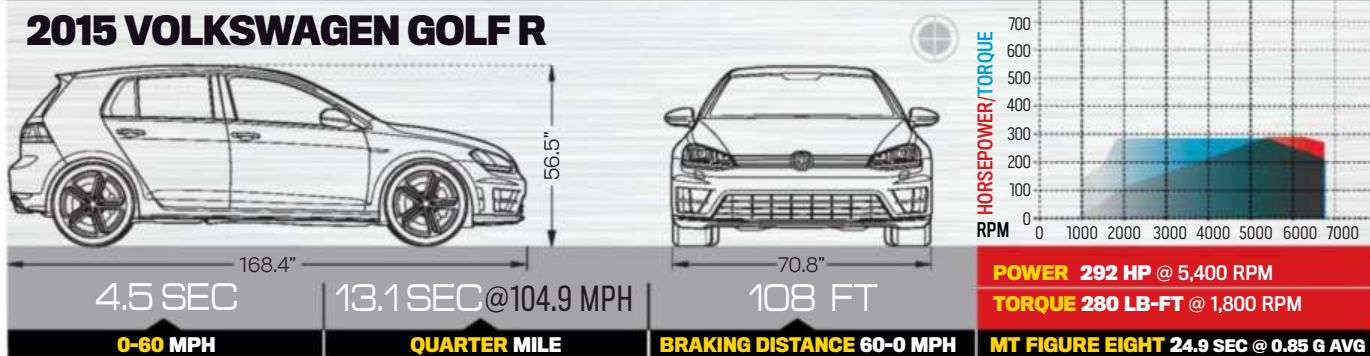
THE CONTENDERS...

2016 PORSCHE CAYMAN GT4



PRICE AS TESTED \$104,815 **DRIVELINE** Mid-engine, 3.8L/385-hp/309-lb-ft DOHC 24-valve flat-6, 6M, RWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Control arms, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 16.1-in vented, drilled, carbon-ceramic disc; 15.4-in vented, drilled, carbon-ceramic disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 3,037 lb (44/56%)

2015 VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R



PRICE AS TESTED \$39,910 **DRIVELINE** Front-engine, 2.0L/292-hp/280-lb-ft turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4, 6-spd twin-cl auto, AWD **SUSPENSION, F; R** Struts, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar **BRAKES, F; R** 13.4-in vented disc; 12.2-in vented disc, ABS **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 3,384 lb (60/40%)



Keeping our noses clean with paint protection film

OVER OUR WEEKLONG BDC program, we put more than 700 miles on each competitor. That includes the transit stages from Los Angeles to central California's Route 198 to Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca and back down to the old Marine Corps Air Station El Toro in Orange County. To protect the noses of all of the vehicles, we

relied on the help of Service Group Distribution, which sent fast and friendly installers to apply CCL Design's premium Nano-Fusion Paint Protection Film. To protect the windshields from the gravel on El Toro's unmaintained runways during the filming of "World's Greatest Drag Race 5" (find it on YouTube or Motor Trend On Demand!), we hire a street



Stuff of Dreams
Yes, we're already aware of what people want to see next year.



- Acura NSX
- Audi R8
- 2016 Chevy Camaro
- Ferrari 488 GTB
- Ford Mustang Shelby GT350R
- Lotus Evora 400
- McLaren 570S
- Race version of the Mitsubishi Mirage
- We're on it.

sweeper and temporarily cover the windshields with the Nano-Fusion PPF. Does it work? Heck yeah. We've incurred no nose damage and only one cracked windshield in the past three years.

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THE FUTURE OF TESTING



MEASURING THE DRIVER AS WELL AS THE CAR

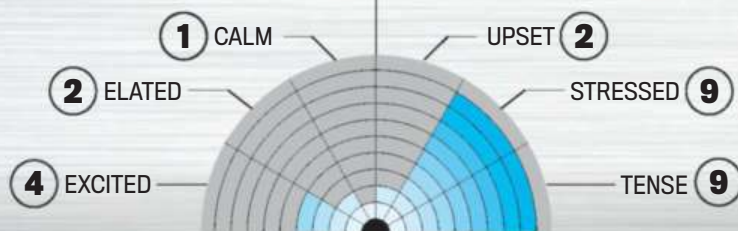
It's 3 a.m. I can't sleep, so I flip on the TV. There's a hard-boiled, black-and-white noir movie on. (At least that's what I'm always hoping will be on.) Spencer Tracy, in an angled black hat, has a phone receiver pressed tight against his face.

"Yeah, that's right. Meet me at midnight, down at the docks. You know the place." He's quiet for a few seconds, listening, then says, "OK, OK, don't worry. I've got the microfilm." He pauses, listening again, then blurts, "Look, if you don't produce Susan, safe and sound, that precious little 'item' of yours will be swimming with the fishes!" He slowly places the receiver in the cradle and exhales as he tilts his hat back. Sounds like an interesting conversation. Well, at least from the half of it I heard.

For a guy who goes to a lot of trouble trying to measure how cars perform at the limit, I often feel like I'm listening to Tracy talking on that phone. The wiggles on my computer screen are just half of a conversation, as if it were every other line in a script. Like Tracy's words, they're often puzzling responses to what *MT* driver Randy Pobst—in this case, the guy on the other end of the "phone"—is conversing with the car about in his language of gestures and motions.

You're probably wondering why I don't just ask Pobst what happened after the car pulls in, right? What's the fuss about? Let me tell you about last year's Best Driver's Car.

If you recall, we placed a rear-facing GoPro camera on the inside of each windshield to record Pobst's facial expressions during his hot laps. Albert Cruz, an expert in human facial expression analysis (then at UC Riverside) dissected each video into Pobst's state of attention (or inattention), as well as his "valence"—in human language, his liking or disliking what was going on. Ultimately, Cruz even subdivided Pobst's expressions into his basic emotional



All numbers here and below were normalized to depict the driving environment on a 1-10 scale. The six emotional states are produced by facial emotion analysis done by Albert Cruz. Randy's expressions were dissected into the emotions, the intensity representing how long each appeared.

Attention



Randy's attention is a synthesis of five emotion scores: sedate, slightly alert, alert, very alert, and energized.

Happiness



This one is also a simplification. A score of 1 only means it's the lowest score of the group and could be due to Randy's expectations.

Breathing Rate



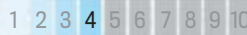
The maximum breathing rate recorded by the Hexoskin vest. We chose to show this instead of average air volume breathed per minute.

Torso Load



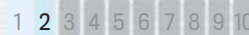
The peak magnitude of g's recorded by the vest's accelerometers represents a combination of the g's the driver experienced.

Heart Rate



The max heart rate is also recorded by the vest. A 10 on any of these scales means it was the highest value among all the cars.

Skin Temperature



The Empatica E4 device detected Randy's maximum skin temp after he'd worn it for a few minutes and the signal settled down.

Stress Level



Also recorded by the Empatica E4, this one uses two small electrodes in the wristband to measure skin conductivity.

Steering Activity



Similar to the Torso Load, this one is from a three-axis accelerometer pack within the E4. It reflects how busy his hands are.

The accelerometers and data logger of the Hexoskin vest slip neatly into a pocket. Plugging it in starts the recording.



The Empatica E4 records skin temp, stress level, heart rate, and hand motion. It's all controlled by a simple button on its face.



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EMOTION EXPERTS Albert Cruz (back right) and his students (from left, Geromar Hasta, James Charleston, and Kody Bryan) at California State University Bakersfield analyzed face-cam videos, which were cropped to show only Pobst's face.

states, also recognizing what are called his microexpressions—concealed emotions (even inadvertent ones) lasting about one-twentieth of a sec. Until recently, this was pretty arcane stuff. But if you happened to see Pixar's movie "Inside Out," those characters in the kid's brain (her internal emotions) are a simplification of the states Cruz is talking about.

What was striking was how incongruent Pobst's after-the-fact discussions sometimes were with his real-time expressions. Most peculiar was his reaction to the Z28, our 2015 BDC winner. Often, while actually lapping it, he looked "alarmed" (Cruz's analysis). Afterward, Pobst heaped swooning praise on the very same experience. After much pacing around and chin rubbing, my best explanation is that we're genuinely seeing two accurate versions of reality. Real-time responses as he actually flashes past concrete barriers versus a post-processed mental story about it, while relaxed and leaning against the car, without the imminent threat of a crash. Raise your hand if you've screamed on a roller coaster ride and afterward laughed and said, "Wow, let's do that again." The scream and the laugh are both honest, true responses.

Frankly, other than the simplest of questions, clear-cut answers to anything in car testing is rare. Back when we created BDC's predecessor story, called "Best Handling Car," I bombarded the contenders with a battery of scientific tests to tease out their handling subtleties. What I found (again and again) was that, ironically, the



FACE TIME A camera in front of a driver isn't a problem for road-racer Randy. We used a smaller GoPro Hero4 Sessions to reduce the obstruction.

one thing I couldn't do was actually identify ... the Best Handling Car. I could clearly spot the quirks that eliminated most of the also-rans, but the winner passed right through my fine-mesh filter; it had no warts to notice. Once again, I was hearing only Spencer Tracy's half of the conversation.

So our target here is not just the car, but the driver, too—the word that's right in the middle of this story's title. What's the driver experiencing? Can we observe the back-and-forth interplay between Pobst and each of these cars in real time? Somehow hear—and interpret—the conversation going on between steering and pedals, horsepower and handling balance, heartbeats and deep breaths, and smiles and grimaces that are right at the intersection of everything driving is about?

This year, we brought back Cruz (now teaching at California State University Bakersfield) to supervise the Pobst face-cam work, and backing him up were three of his students who trained in understanding the subtleties of Pobst's facial characteristics by studying last

year's videos. In addition, we surrounded all this with two interesting devices that represent the coming wave of wearable sensors.

One is a product called Hexoskin, from Carré Technologies in Montreal. Basically, it's a stretchable, breathable vest (there's a shirt version, too) that's embedded with sensors. One acquires heart rate information (from which it calculates recovery, too), another, respiration data (breathing rate and capacity), and both are recorded by a tiny logger that also contains a three-axis accelerometer yielding your running cadence, or how often you toss and turn while sleeping. The data Bluetooths to your phone and downloads to your computer, and your records are always available in cloud storage. It's beyond cool.

On Pobst's wrist we strapped another remarkable device called the E4 by Empatica, a start-up based on science from the MIT Media Lab. The E4, as well as another Empatica product, Embrace (which doubles as a stylish watch) are actually medical-grade sensor packages for epileptics. Startlingly, one in 26 Americans will experience an epileptic seizure during their lifetime (which can be quite dangerous for everyone involved) and Empatica's wearables both provide detection and send warnings to friends, family members, even doctors. Our E4's cloud-loggable sensors include heart rate, skin temperature, hand motion, and stress level based upon skin conductance. That last one is particularly useful to Cruz, as it reinforces his analysis of facial expressions. (It's also a key measure during lie-detector tests.) Several years ago I was talking about the future of road testing with my friend and race car engineer Paul Van Valkenburgh, who commented: "One of these days you won't be putting any equipment on the cars at all. You'll wear everything in your clothes and just climb in."

With Pobst belted into an idling BDC contender on the track's pit row, I'd switched on our VBox and Racepak instruments and then plugged in the Hexoskin's data logger. Pobst zipped up his racing suit, and Cruz started the E4's recording on his wrist. Van Valkenburgh was right, and the future is arriving with wearables such as these. The driver's movements, emotional feelings, and physiological responses; the car's blistering acceleration, the delicate drifts through corners, the scuffing "sheesh" while threshold braking. Unlike Spencer Tracy's phone call, soon we'll be listening in on both ends of this conversation between driver and car. And in this year's "Best Driver's Car," you'll find the first of these results. In the months ahead, we'll be further processing the subtle meaning behind the words. Stay tuned for the future. **Kim Reynolds**

Soon we'll be listening in on both ends of this conversation between driver and car. And in this year's Best Driver's Car, you'll find the first of these results.



Plug in and take names.

The all-new Audi A3 e-tron* plug-in hybrid is here.

It doesn't look like a hybrid. It certainly doesn't drive like a hybrid. And with its class-leading horsepower* and impressive 7.5 second 0-60 mph time, it's clear the Audi A3 e-tron delivers the unbridled power and performance to leave other hybrids in its wake. In other words, it's everything you'd expect from an Audi.



*Horsepower claim based on manufacturer published specifications. Class defined as the 2016 Audi A3 e-tron, 2015 BMW i3, 2015 Lexus CT, 2015 Chevrolet Volt, 2014 Honda Accord PHEV, 2015 Ford C-MAX, 2015 Nissan LEAF, 2015 Toyota Prius and the 2015 Mercedes-Benz B-Class ED. "Audi," "e-tron," "Truth in Engineering," all model names, and the four rings logo are registered trademarks of AUDI AG. ©2015 Audi of America, Inc.



It didn't work. The damn Z06 retarded spark by 8 degrees, and the 1.7-liter TVS super-charger refused to make boost.

Chevrolet came up with a "bad gas" theory, but Big Nasty got filled at the same Chevron stations as everyone else and even swallowed 8 gallons of 101 octane to wake the super-charger. No luck. What we have here is a failure to compete. What a pity.

Have a look at the specs: 650 hp; 650 lb-ft of torque; big, brawny Brembos; 15.5-inch carbon-ceramic rotors with six-piston monobloc calipers up front, 15.3-inch carbon-ceramic rotors with four-piston monobloc calipers on the rear; relatively light weight due to its stiff aluminum chassis; and in Stage III Aero guise, the Z07 package records lateral acceleration of 1.17 g, thanks in part to the sticky Michelin

If any car could dominate Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, it's this Corvette Z06.

Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires (285/30R19 front; 335/25R20 rear). If any car could dominate Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, it's this Chevy. This is the horse you bet to win.

1:38.60. That time is the best lap our sick Z06 managed to squeak out. Here's a list of cars from this year's BDC the broken Z06 was able to limp around Laguna quicker than: Mazda Miata, Volkswagen Golf R, Bentley GT3-R, Lexus RC F, both



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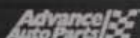


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
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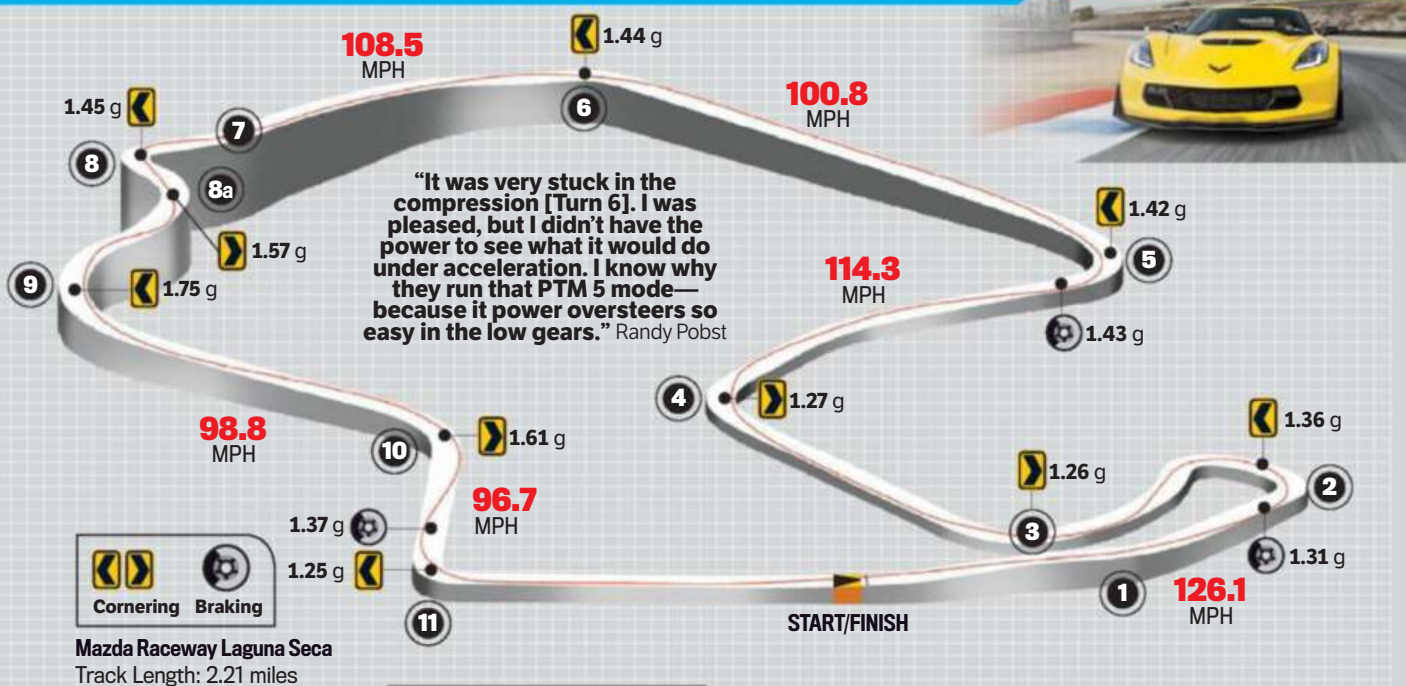
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"What we have here is a failure to compete. What a pity."

dnf

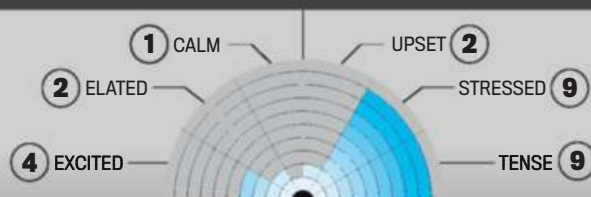
Jonny Lieberman, senior features editor



LAP TIME:

min **01** sec **:38** 1/10 **.60**

The look of disappointment



Attention 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

Happiness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Breathing Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10

Torso Load

1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

Heart Rate

1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9 10



Skin Temperature

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stress Level

1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

Steering Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10

DR. CRUZ: "He wasn't fully engaged, paying less attention in the middle of the Corkscrew, which normally elicits the most attention from Randy." The car's drivetrain issues were preventing Randy from using it to its full potential.

HEARTBREAK Big Nasty was wounded, but even hurt, the LT4 6.2-liter V-8 performed admirably. If only we had a healthy 'Vette...

Cadillac ATS-Vs (a manual and an automatic), and Mercedes-AMG C63 S. Also, the totally healthy Cadillac CTS-V managed to just pip the lame Z06 by 8 hundredths of a second.

Those bested competitors are just from this year's group. Dig into the history books and you'll see the busted 'Vette was also quicker than an Audi V10 Plus (1:38.70), Shelby GT500 (1:38.70), Mercedes-Benz

SLS AMG (1:38.82), Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series (1:38.90), Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (1:39.19), and a Chevy Camaro ZL1 (1:39.20). Chevy fans can take solace in the fact that even when wounded, the Z06 is quicker than most other high-performance machines. But can you imagine what time a working Z06 would lay down? Remember, the ZR1 managed 1:33.70. Sigh.

From MacKenzie: "Kudos to GM for always manning up and putting its cars forward for the most grueling performance test in the business. So it was disappointing to see Big Nasty sidelined by a mysterious engine problem not even the GM techs on hand could figure out. And disappointing to also discover that a car supposedly specially earmarked for BDC testing had been sent to

us with worn-out brake pads." Oh yeah, the brake pads were in terrible shape. Had the Z06 been making full boost, one of us might have been in big trouble on 198.

Chevy is now thinking that California's 91 octane confused the computer when it mixed with 93 octane from Arizona. I say that's

bogus because not only is California the Z06's largest market and our "premium" fuel a known quantity, but you're going to tell me this is what will happen to skinflint owners who try to save a buck or two by filling their Z06es with midgrade fuel? That, and this entire ordeal, is unacceptable. **Jonny Lieberman**





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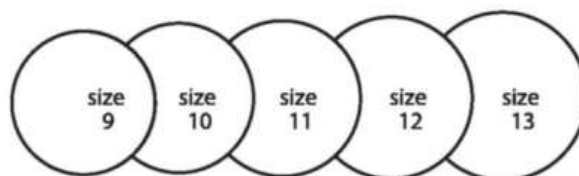
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Sharp-eyed readers will note that in BDC 2014, the VW Golf GTI came in dead last. One year, 72 more horsepower, two more driven wheels, and an R badge later, and big brother Golf R finishes only one step up (over a DNFing Vette)? How does that work?

Well, a hot hatch of any stripe is going to face fierce competition in a field stacked with single-purpose

sports cars and hot-rodded super sedans. There is only so much you can squeeze from an economy car platform built for practicality and efficiency. Much of what we loved about the Golf, the features that made it our 2015 Car of the Year—its smart package, excellent ride, and handling balance—put it at a disadvantage in our quest to find the car that delivers maximum fun and emotion.

That said, our editors found a lot

What we loved about the Golf that made it our 2015 COTY put it at a disadvantage.

to like about the R on Route 198, particularly the 292-horsepower, 2.0-liter, turbocharged four-cylinder. "The engine pulls hard and loves to rev," Kiino said. "Best turbo-four of the hot-hatch crowd."

The brakes were also singled out. "The brakes are a pleasant surprise—they're great—which is completely unexpected from VW," Cammis said.

These positives were confirmed



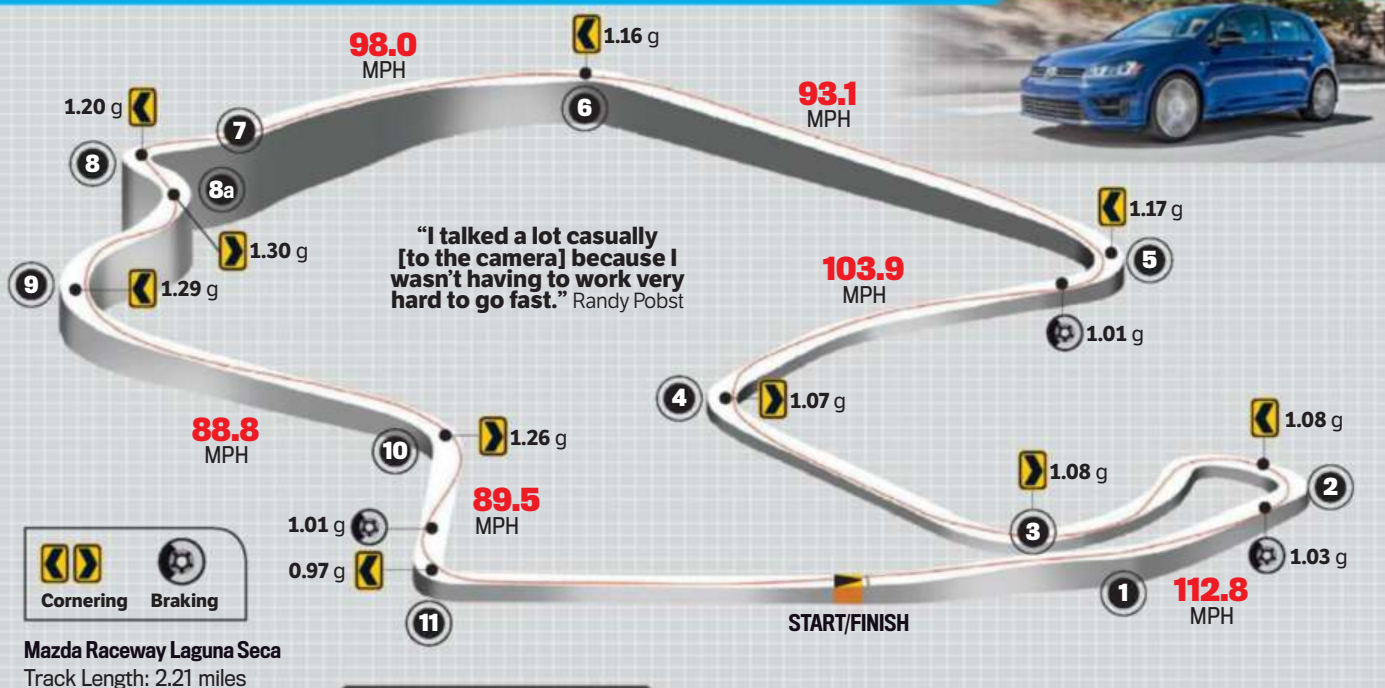
MASS DESIGN
The Volkswagen Golf R's classically skinned interior is unadventurous, but like many of the Best Driver's Car contenders, it does have launch control.



"It's dominated by understeer, and being on the power just makes the understeer worse."

Randy Pobst, professional racer

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LAP TIME:

min sec 1/10
01 :46 .95

Easy really does it

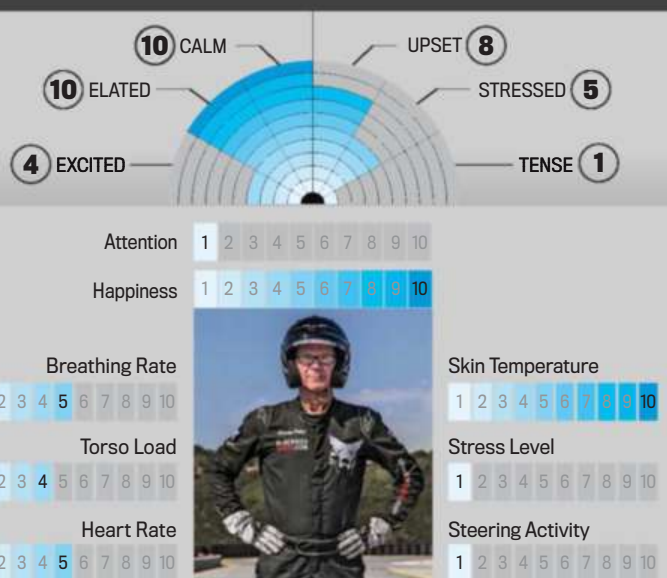


SURGERY New pistons and modifications to the cylinder head, fuel injection, and turbo give the VW Golf R a boost over the GTI.

on the track, too. "The car is quiet, smooth, refined," said Pobst, who did in-car commentary for our YouTube videos while hot lapping. "It's a very comfortable car to drive in terms of ride and in terms of being easy to control. I talked casually a lot because I wasn't having to work very hard to go fast." How fast? The Golf R's 1:46.95 was the second slowest

this year. That sounds bad until you look at our Laguna Lap list (page 74) and note that time beats a 2006 Porsche Cayman S, the most recent Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X we tested, and a few other bona fide sports cars.

Of course, even the fastest lap does not define the best driver's car, and what most prevented the Golf R from being in the BDC conversation was fun-killing understeer. Pobst found it dominated the track experience, made worse with power, but it wasn't solely a track complaint. "The AWD system sucks the spark out of the chassis," MacKenzie said. "Driving the Golf R fast on Highway 198 was basically a matter of estimating how much understeer you could get away with before you started washing off too much corner speed."



DR. CRUZ: "Like the Miata, Randy finds the Golf R fun and not too demanding. He's able to divert attention to critiquing the car. 'It sure is easy,' he says." Curiously, his skin temperature was quite high, though.

Handling wasn't all it was missing. The turbo-muffled engine note left a lot of us flat. "There's just no passion here. No emotion," Evans said. Lieberman concurred: "It doesn't do a very good job of transmitting excitement. In this group of contenders, the Golf R comes across as comfortably numb."

Sound harsh? Perhaps, but Markus summed it up best.

"This car never felt like a serious BDC contender," he said, "but as a single car tasked with providing all the utility, comfort, speed, and driving enjoyment a budget-minded enthusiast requires, it's a great choice." **Ed Loh**





In a day and age when turbocharging and downsizing are the names of the

high-performance (and more fuel-efficient) game—look, Bentley dropped all the way down to a twin-turbo, 4.0-liter V-8—the naturally aspirated motor is fast becoming the California condor of Best Driver's Car. In fact, in this year's field, only the Mazda MX-5, Porsche GT4, and

Lexus RC F came unboosted, and of those only the Lexus offered eight cylinders. And yes, we adored all eight of 'em.

"I LOVE this engine note!" Markus said. "There's nothing like a naturally aspirated V-8 to stand your neck hairs on end."

During our road evaluation up and down Route 198, we also found much to love with the RC F's eight-speed automatic, from its

"There's nothing like a naturally aspirated V-8 to stand your neck hairs on end."

quick, seamless shifts and intuitive programming to its spine-tingling, throttle-blipping downshifts in Sport+ mode. MacKenzie even opined, "Easily bests the Caddy CTS-V's tranny in terms of smoothness and responsiveness."

Not surprising, the 5.0-liter, eight-speed powertrain puts down fast stats: 0-60 in 4.5 seconds, the quarter mile in 12.9 seconds at 110.3 mph, and a lap time of 1:43.20



F THIS Both the Lexus RC F and the LS 400 have naturally breathing V-8s, but every other facet of the RC F is far removed from the calm, demure LS 400.

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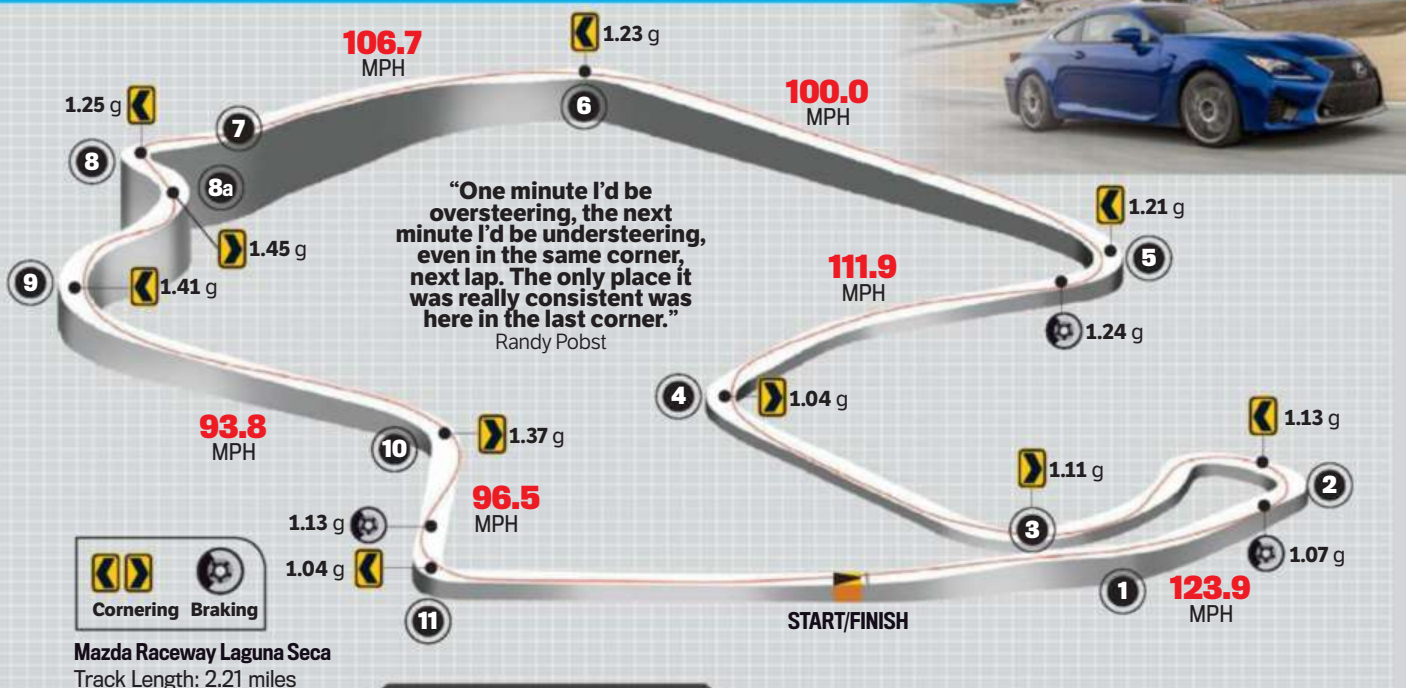
Prototype shown with options. Production model may vary. ©2015 Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.



"First impressions of the RC F are good. Drive it beyond seven-tenths, though, and the chassis falls apart."

Angus MacKenzie, editor at large

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LAP TIME:

min **01** :sec **43** .1/10 **20**

Physically easy but busy hands



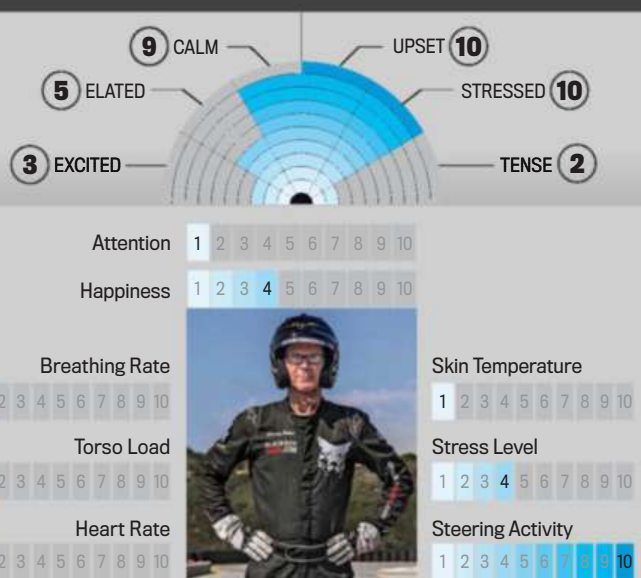
ALIVE We'll likely never see an engine like the LFA V-10 ever again, but Lexus seems happy with the V-8 found in the RC F. We were, too.

around Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. It's quicker than the Audi RS 5 (1:43.60) and the Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Edition 507 (1:43.49) that we lapped back in 2013.

The problem is, the Lexus' speed doesn't translate to emotion, a much-needed qualifier when ranking contenders for Best Driver's Car. "I want engagement," Lieberman said. "I want to be

thrilled. What I don't want is to get out of the car thinking, 'That's much faster than I thought.' That's the problem with the RC F." The car's unrelenting suspension over bumpy pavement was more problematic. Noted Cammisa: "With this bouncy suspension, it's no wonder the ESP system has been programmed to handle Nürburgring jumps. The damn thing is always pogoing off the ground."

Pobst heaped praise on the power and behavior of the RC F's braking system around MRLS but not much else. "You release the brakes, and it's like a box of chocolates," he noted. "You're not real sure what you're going to get. One minute it's oversteer, next minute it just pushes. The handling list needs to go to finishing school." Further, although the eight-speed



DR. CRUZ: "There are a few instances where Randy is happily drifting, but this is overshadowed by disappointment with the shifting." The RC F doesn't challenge Randy physically, but it needs lots of steering motions.



auto proved a champ on the street, Pobst deemed it more of a chump on the track. "I was completely distracted by the shift program; not happy. I'd get into a hairpin—especially a slow hairpin like Turn 2 or the Corkscrew—turn down into the corner, go for the power, nobody home. Blah!"

As MacKenzie put it: "First impressions of the RC F are good. Drive it beyond seven-tenths, though, and the chassis falls apart." So enroll the RC F in finishing school, Lexus, address those three-tenths, and invite us back to graduation—we'd be happy to take it for another spin.

Ron Kiino

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:07

BEST DRIVER'S CAR

CADILLAC ATS-V

When Better-Driving BMWs are Built ...



We loved the Cadillac ATS-V enough to rank its four-door variant well ahead of the iconic BMW M3 in October's "Four-Door Miracles" comparison test. Yes, the BMW has lost some of its driving ultimacy of late, and thankfully Cadillac has stepped in to give enthusiasts what Bavaria isn't these days: a light and rigid body, an expertly balanced chassis, and

the power and torque required to connect the corners on a challenging road or race circuit while delivering visceral thrills.

For this exercise we opted for the sportier-looking and 34-pound lighter coupe variant. MacKenzie spoke for us all, noting that its "steering and chassis are a delight, way more communicative and composed than the current-generation of BMW M3/M4." Loh

The ATS-V gives enthusiasts what Bavaria isn't: power, torque, and visceral thrills.

described the ATS-V as "a modern update on the E46 [2001-2006] M3," praising its blistering speed, well-balanced ride, and eagerness to change direction. Kiino enthused about the slick manual gearbox, and Cammisa deemed this Cadillac to have "the best stability-control programming this side of Ferrari" and among "the best clutch and e-gas calibration of any sport sedan in the world."



TASTE SHIFT

The ATS-V was one of four cars at Best Driver's Car offering a choice between manual or automatic transmissions; we urge you to try the ATS-V's no-lift shift.

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Truly Unique

Time travel at the speed of a 1935 Speedster?

The 1930s brought unprecedented innovation in machine-age technology and materials. Industrial designers from the auto industry translated the principles of aerodynamics and streamlining into everyday objects like radios and toasters. It was also a decade when an unequalled variety of watch cases and movements came into being. In lieu of hands to tell time, one such complication, called a jumping mechanism, utilized numerals on a disc viewed through a window. With its striking resemblance to the dashboard gauges and radio dials of the decade, the jump hour watch was indeed "in tune" with the times!

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True to Machine Art esthetics, the sleek brushed stainless steel case is clear on the back, allowing a peek at the inner workings.

actual jumping complication). The stainless steel 1 1/2" case is complemented with a black alligator-embossed leather band. The band is 9 1/2" long and will fit a 7-8 1/2" wrist.

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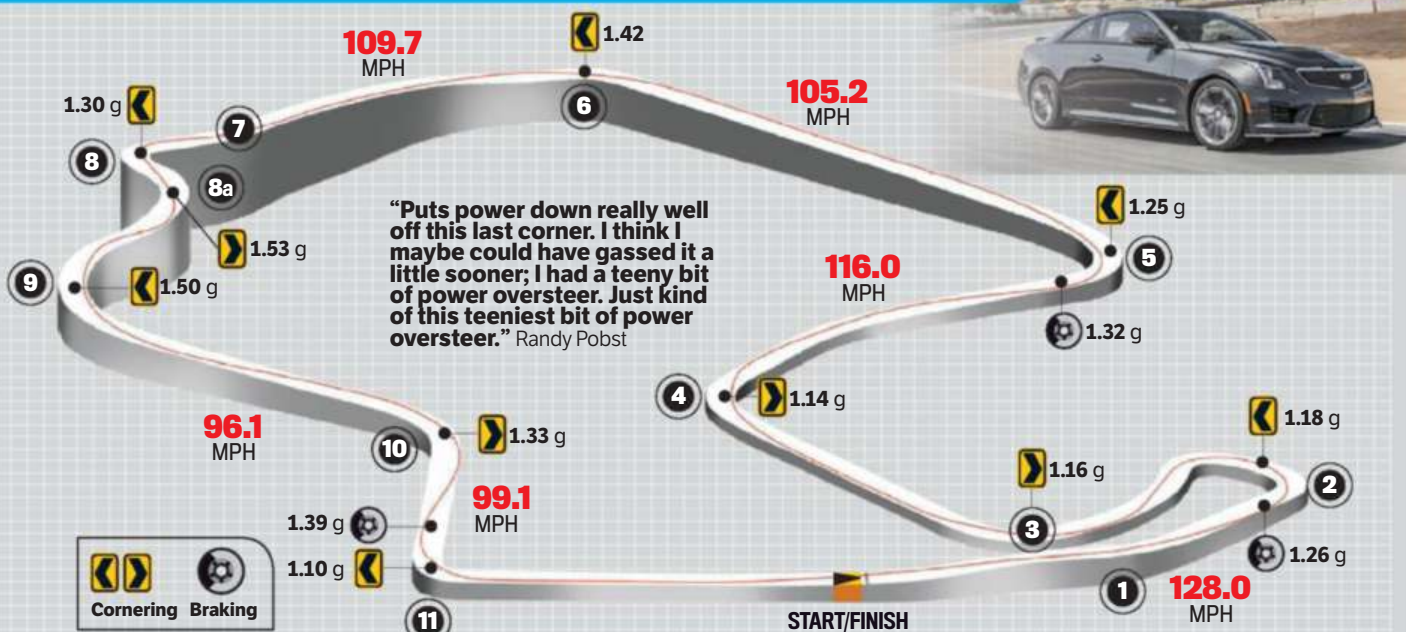




"This car has all the right bits to be Best Driver's Car with just a bit more fine-tuning."

Frank Markus, technical director

:07



Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca
Track Length: 2.21 miles

Track times are for 6-speed manual

LAP TIME:

min **01** sec **:40** 1/10 **.18**

Total attention, total elation



BIG STICK It speaks softly, but the LF4's got it where it counts, with more horsepower than the M3/M4 and torque for days.

At Mazda Raceway, Pobst emerged heaping praise on the no-lift shift feature. He proclaimed the ATS-V happy on the racetrack and said it delivers a stable chassis without much understeer. He was pleased that the damping allows enough compliance to permit some weight transfer when transitioning to power at corner exits, preventing oversteer. And indeed its lap times

(we track-tested both six-speed manual and eight-speed automatic coupe variants) ranked fifth place, the swifter shifting automatic with a 1:39.65 and the manual trailing by 0.53 second.

So how did the car end up in seventh place? The top two reasons are brakes and steering. Both work great but with poor feel/feedback. MacKenzie: "The ATS-V stops just fine. It's the pedal feel that's the problem." Pobst: "There's a lot of travel where nothing is happening, and then the braking happens up at the bottom."

Likewise, the steering points the car exceptionally well, but the effort and feel drew criticism for seeming artificially stiff on Route 198 in the chassis' Track mode (Pobst liked the feel at MRLS) and for failing to communicate road surface details.



Attention 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Happiness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Breathing Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Torso Load

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Heart Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Skin Temperature

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stress Level

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Steering Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

DR. CRUZ: "Higher attention with a few short periods of laughing and smiling exiting turns. He was pleased with its handling capabilities." He's also breathing very hard. And wow—look at Randy's high levels of elation and tenseness.



Lieberman correctly observed that "less than ideal steering feel will keep any car from becoming our Best Driver's Car."

Pobst felt a bit of turbo lag from the otherwise amply powerful and torquey twin-turbo V-6 on corner exits, and Evans felt it runs out of revs 1,000 rpm too early. Lieberman

agreed. "It's too quiet," he said, "and the redline is too low."

The bottom line is this car has all the right bits to be a Best Driver's Car with just a bit more fine-tuning of the brake and steering feel and perhaps some minor engine calibration work. We look forward to inviting the ATS-V 2.0 to a future BDC. **Frank Markus**

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To exactly no one's surprise, the CTS-V is both a destroyer of DMV driving records and a trigger of conversations. "Six-hunnid-n-forty horsepower," drivers will say to an awestruck co-pilot (or an inquisitive law officer), usually finishing with, "It has the same engine as a Corvette, too!"

What its 6.2-liter heart unleashes is simply dumbfounding. It not only

pushes you beyond legal speed limits and has you screaming hallelujah! for its six-piston Brembos, but it also meticulously threads every corner in between with genuine track-bred balance. Runs to 60 mph take 3.8 seconds. A quarter mile flashes by in 11.9 seconds at 122 mph. It jinks with an ice skater's speed and precision, and all this from 4,108-pound, rear-wheel-drive, eight-speed automatic sedan.

The CTS-V pushes you beyond legal speed limits and has you screaming hallelujah!

"God, it's good to be alive!" exclaimed Pobst after setting the third-fastest lap of this year's BDC. "What I mean is, it's good to be alive and driving cars like this: big, powerful. The CTS-V has a tremendous amount of torque, and I'm a big fan of torque. I can just see the American flag waving."

Although we deeply admire the V's heroic punch and pace, applying its muscle at ten-tenths



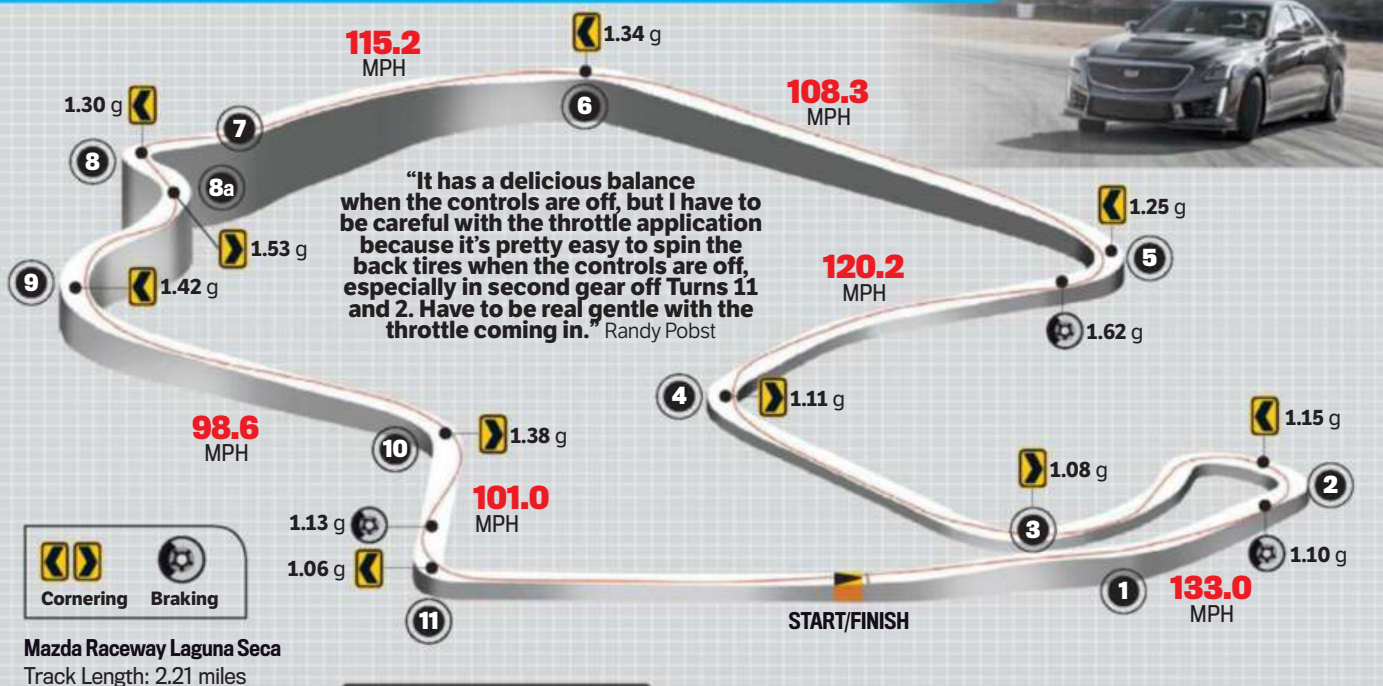
THIRD TIME LUCKY Better handling. More luxurious. Superior speed. The CTS-V has come a long way from gens one and two.



"Hustle it with a wary right foot and you'll get a whiff of what a five-seat Corvette might be like."

Nate Martinez, assistant road test editor

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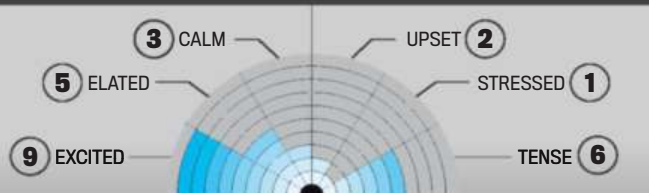


"It has a delicious balance when the controls are off, but I have to be careful with the throttle application because it's pretty easy to spin the back tires when the controls are off, especially in second gear off Turns 11 and 2. Have to be real gentle with the throttle coming in." Randy Pobst

LAP TIME:

min sec 1/10
01 :38 .52

Peaks in excitement—and stress



Attention 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Happiness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Breathing Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Torso Load

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Heart Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Skin Temperature

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stress Level

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Steering Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



DR. CRUZ: "Randy was engaged from the start, and even cooling off, the CTS-V kept his concentration in turns. He was most pleased when discussing the handling and torque." And he was really working like crazy in this car.

LIFE, LIBERTY And let's face it: Extracting 640 horsepower from a V-8 goes a long way toward the pursuit of happiness.

took a lot of calculation. Perplexed by its five-mode Performance Traction Management system, many responded by beelining it straight to Race mode (no computer safety nets), in which the rear tires struggled to keep hold, even when the 295/30ZR-19 Michelin Pilot Super Sports were optimally warmed up.

Noted Pobst: "It has a delicious balance when the controls are off.

But I have to be careful with the throttle application because it's pretty easy to spin the back tires when the controls are off, especially in second gear off Turns 11 and 2. I have to be real gentle with the throttle coming in."

On Route 198, Loh was surprised by the chassis' "tons of vertical movement" in PTM mode 3, 4, or 5. Granted, the higher the mode, the more track-focused the vehicle's electronics become—damper stiffness, throttle reactivity, steering heft, and shift speed all are upped—but it was clear that the systems and human involvement were not as well-orchestrated as those in other contenders.

Furthermore, shedding speed took significant pedal pressure. "I was surprised at the brake effort," Pobst said. "It took a lot to make

the car stop fast; it took a lot, and it did stop fast." As for the gearbox, Loh praised its sharpness, calling it "eager and aggressive" and adding that it was "rarely caught out."

Without a doubt, the CTS-V is a super sedan. Hustle it with a wary right foot, and you'll get a whiff of what a five-seat Corvette might be

like. But as prized as stopwatch athleticism is to our BDC jury, so too is the pixie dust of harmony that sometimes connects hands to contact patches and feet to pistons and pads. That feeling of oneness and driver confidence is what held the brutal Caddy back.

Nate Martinez





This is not what we expected. Even with no rear seat, a titanium exhaust system, and

lashings of carbon fiber everywhere, the Bentley Continental GT3-R would surely still be too big, too heavy, too ponderous to be a serious Best Driver's Car contender. The charms of Bentley's stylish and effortlessly fast Conti coupes are many, but the laws of physics

suggest that pinballing from apex to apex through the twisties with your hair on fire and a broad grin planted on your face ain't one of them.

Nobody told the GT3-R, though.

"This thing is 2.5 tons of fun! Shockingly brilliant balance on power and huge grip everywhere," enthused Cammisa after a storming run up and back 198. It might weigh 213 pounds less than a Continental GT V8 S, but at 4,919 pounds—a

The GT3-R is built like an offensive lineman, but it drove more like a wide receiver.

solid 811 pounds more than the next heaviest car here—the GT3-R is anything but svelte. It's built like an offensive lineman, but on 198 it drove more like a wide receiver.

The secret sauce is brake-induced torque vectoring, the inside rear caliper clamping the rotor to help the big car rotate toward the apex. That, combined with the tweaked 4.0-liter engine, which develops 52 hp and 16 lb-ft of torque



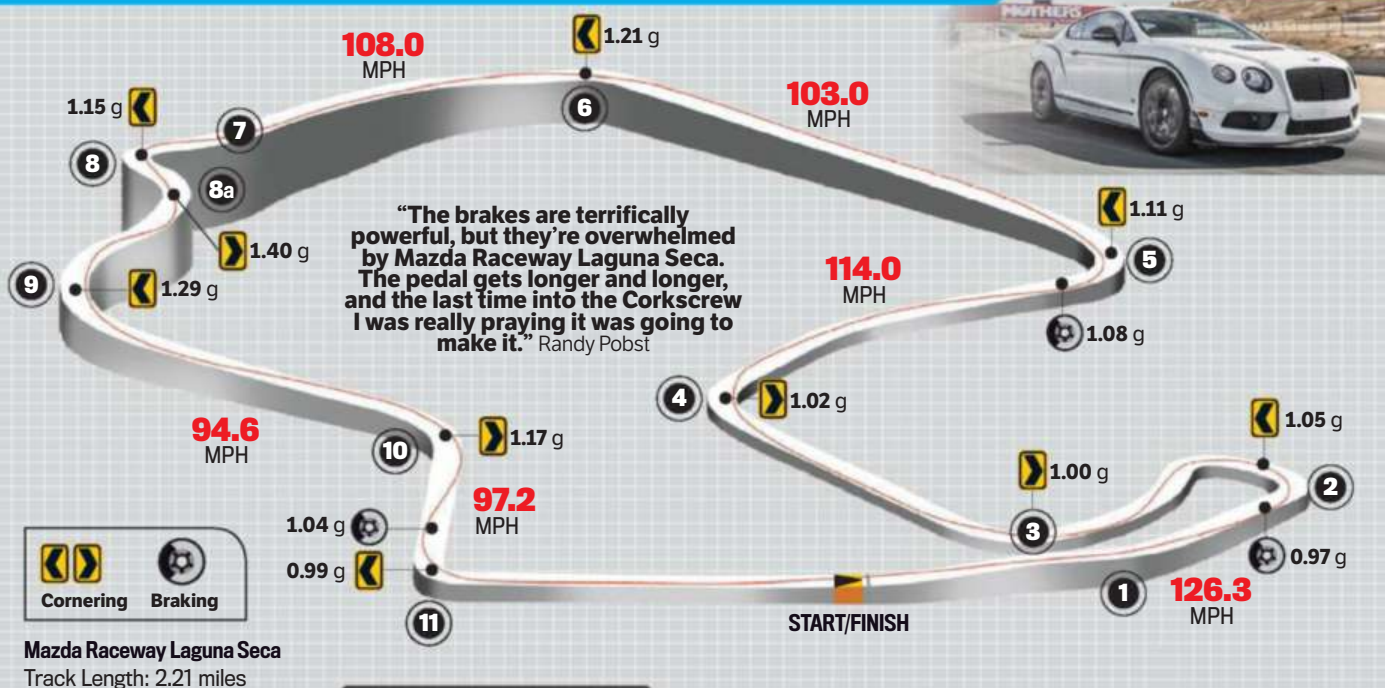
GONE GREEN
Green contrast accenting inside and out is shared with Bentley's Continental GT3 race car. Just 300 GT3-Rs were built—99 for the U.S.



"This thing is 2.5 tons of fun! Shockingly brilliant balance on power and huge grip everywhere!"

Jason Cammisa, senior features editor

105



LAP TIME:

min sec 1/10
01 :43 .51

As exciting to drive as to look at



FLYING B The 3.3-second 0-60 time produced by this monstrous V-8 is deliciously quick, making the GT3-R the swiftest Bentley we've tested.

more than in the regular Continental GT V8 S (more during overboost), the beautifully matched eight-speed automatic, and the oily tactility of the steering, made the GT3-R feel at times like the world's biggest, fastest, most refined WRX STI.

Not all judges were effusive in their praise, however: "There was a mildly unsettling neutrality/rear oversteer motion in a few corners,"

said Markus, "and my uneasiness stemmed from knowing how much the car weighed—and how much inertia would be in play if this thing got away from me." And there's some truth to the suggestion this Bentley flatters to deceive: The GT3-R's stunning 3.3-second 0-60 mph time, matched in this group only by the Corvette Z06, is largely due to gearing that pegs V-max to a mere 170 mph rather than the 200 mph or so of most Conti GTs.

Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca laid bare the Newtonian reality: "As good as the Bentley was on the road," said Pobst, "it's just not at home on the racetrack. It doesn't have the precision and feels like it's punishing the tires. And the brakes are overwhelmed—the pedal got longer and longer, and the last time into the Corkscrew I was really praying it was going to make it."



Attention 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Happiness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Breathing Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Torso Load

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Heart Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Skin Temperature

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stress Level

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Steering Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

DR. CRUZ: "There were two phases in this video: (1) He was unengaged at first. (2) As he became more accustomed, he flipped between medium attention in slow turns to sometimes high attention describing the car's attributes."

The Bentley's mass makes understeer the default handling mode on the track and there's little you can do to adjust the car's attitude once you're committed to a corner. Front-end grip went away as front tire pressures spiked rapidly from 44 to 60 psi during the warm-up, and the brake fluid couldn't handle

the temperatures generated by the carbon-ceramic discs, leaving the pedal soft after just three hard laps.

For all that the GT3-R was an impressive 3.1 seconds a lap quicker than the W-12 GT Speed that finished 9th in 2013. Progress, then. But not enough to make it our Best Driver's Car. **Angus MacKenzie**





A funny thing happened after we voted: Everyone had a little trouble explaining why the Mercedes-AMG C63 S didn't place higher. The general consensus went something like this: The C63 is great, and there's nothing really wrong with it, but those three other cars were even better.

A few small missteps kept the C63 off the podium. Garnering the

most "yeah, but's" were the brakes. The "but's" were varied: Burgess and I thought they needed more bite, Lieberman felt some unappreciated movement from the rear end, and Cammisa got unexpected fade coming down the hill climb.

Many judges hailed the steering as a top-tier electrically assisted system. Burgess and Markus, however, dissented and asked for more road feel and feedback.

High praise came for the V-8, which kept the C63 S on the more powerful GTS-V's bumper.

Cammisa, Walton, and I registered a final complaint. The transmission's engagement when leaving a stop at anything less than wide-open throttle was aggravating. The first 30 percent of the pedal travel does nothing. Then the engine suddenly revs up more than you'd expect, but it still pulls away "like a 2-horsepower Briggs & Stratton is under the hood," as Cammisa put it.



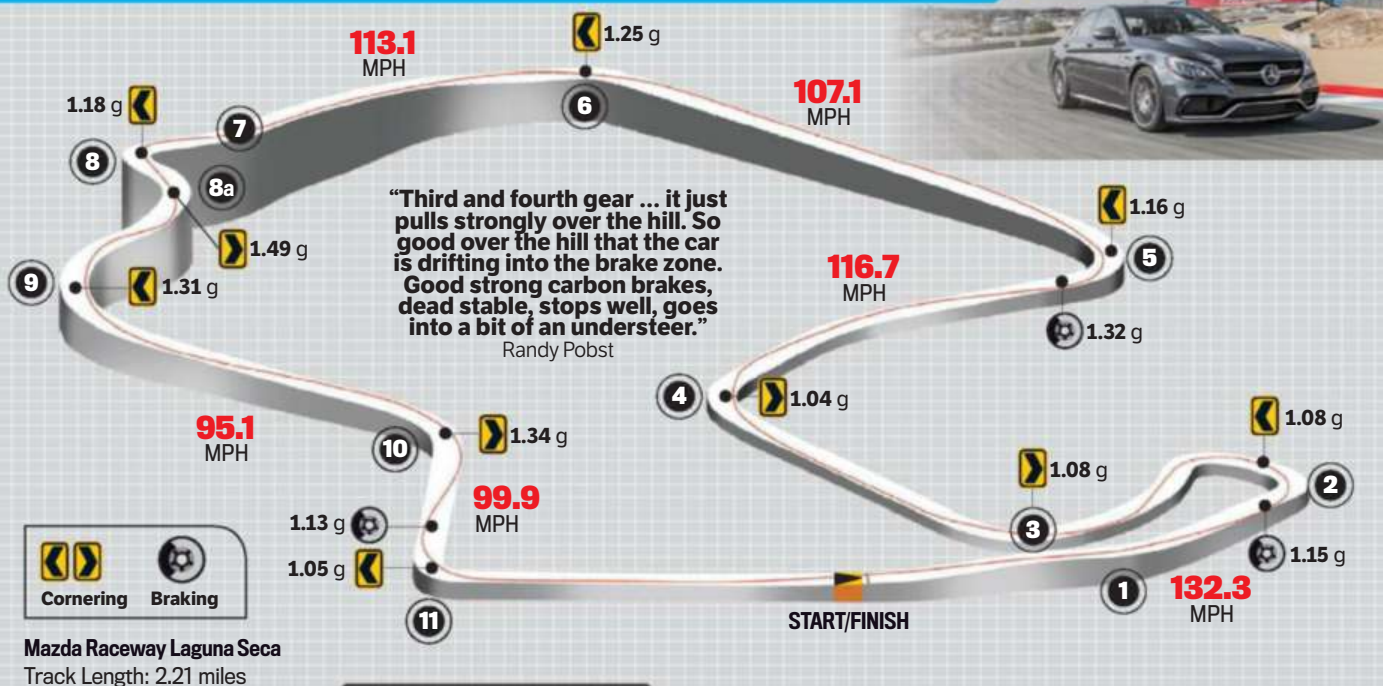
SMALL S
The high-quality, downsized S-Class cabin partially helps secure the C63 S's spot at the top of the luxury-performance-compact-sport sedan heap.



"Best ride-handling trade-offs of all the cars here—and it sounds like Godzilla gargling chain saws!"

Edward Loh, editor-in-chief

104



LAP TIME:

min sec 1/10
01 :40 .50

Busy hands, a tense expression



BOMBS AWAY The 4.0-liter, twin-turbo V-8 in the AMG C63 S will easily surprise stoplight jockeys ... once the rear tires hook up.

That all kept the C63 out of the top three, but everything else made it the best sedan in the test. High praise came for the 4.0-liter, twin-turbo V-8, which kept the car on the bumper of the more powerful Cadillac CTS-V. "Sounds like Godzilla gargling chain saws" was Loh's hyperbolic but apropos assessment.

"On the road it doesn't feel like it's leaving 137 hp on the table

compared with the big-banger 640-hp CTS-V," MacKenzie said. "It delivers a massive shove between the shoulder blades when you nail the gas, accompanied by a thundering exhaust note. I still miss the naturally aspirated 6.2, but the more I drive this new engine, the more the heartache fades. It's going to be an all-time great, too."

The chassis also drew high praise. Loh said it was "one of the best ride-handling trade-offs of all the cars here." Kiino went further, saying it "feels like what a BMW should feel like."

Judges were also fans of the seven-speed multiclutch transmission (once underway). MacKenzie praised it as "significantly better—faster, smoother, more precise—than GM's eight-speed."

Pobst, for his part, was pretty impressed. "The engine does not



Attention 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Happiness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Breathing Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Torso Load

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Heart Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Skin Temperature

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stress Level

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Steering Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

DR. CRUZ: "Less engaging. Randy was alert with above-average attention with rare instances of happiness, anger, and disgust." He was mainly upset and tense here with lots of steering activity but not much heart rate or measurable stress.



feel like a turbo 4.0-liter; it feels like a normally aspirated 7.0-liter, and that's delicious power immediately upon opening your throttle."

Most judges couldn't think of a better sport sedan on the market. Markus and Kiino, neither participants in our comparison between the C63, M3, and ATS-V, noted

they understood how the C63 won after driving it. MacKenzie, always one to turn a phrase, declared it "a hooligan in a Hugo Boss suit," and several judges made reference to it being a kind of four-door AMG GT S ... almost. It's a great car, but just not quite as great as the ones that finished ahead of it. **Scott Evans**

MAZDA MX-5 MIATA

MX-5 Provides More Smiles Per Pound Than Anything on the Road



By the numbers, the 2016 Mazda MX-5 Miata should not have even been in the same county with most of the Best Driver's Car contenders.

Its 155-hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine is 137 ponies behind the Golf R, the second weakest engine in our pack. Four MX-5 engines combined fail to add up to the power of one supercharged Corvette Z06.

The MX-5 had the worst braking numbers, taking 111 feet to go from 60 mph to 0. It had the worst acceleration, quarter-mile, and figure-eight times in the bunch.

But every editor loved driving it, in part because of one criterion where the MX-5 crushed all comers: It weighs 2,296 pounds, more than 700 pounds less than the next lightest vehicle. Two Mazda roadsters weigh 327 pounds less than

The MX-5 Miata is “proof you don’t need a lot of power to make a great driver’s car.”

one Bentley GT3-R. “It’s proof you don’t need a lot of power to make a great driver’s car,” Kiino said.

Added Lieberman: “The chassis is incredible, the steering is remarkably good, the manual transmission is great, the wind’s in your hair, the bugs are in your teeth—all that.” Indeed, the MX-5 doesn’t need the power of a modern-day supercar. It doesn’t even offer drive mode selection for enhanced exit smiles.



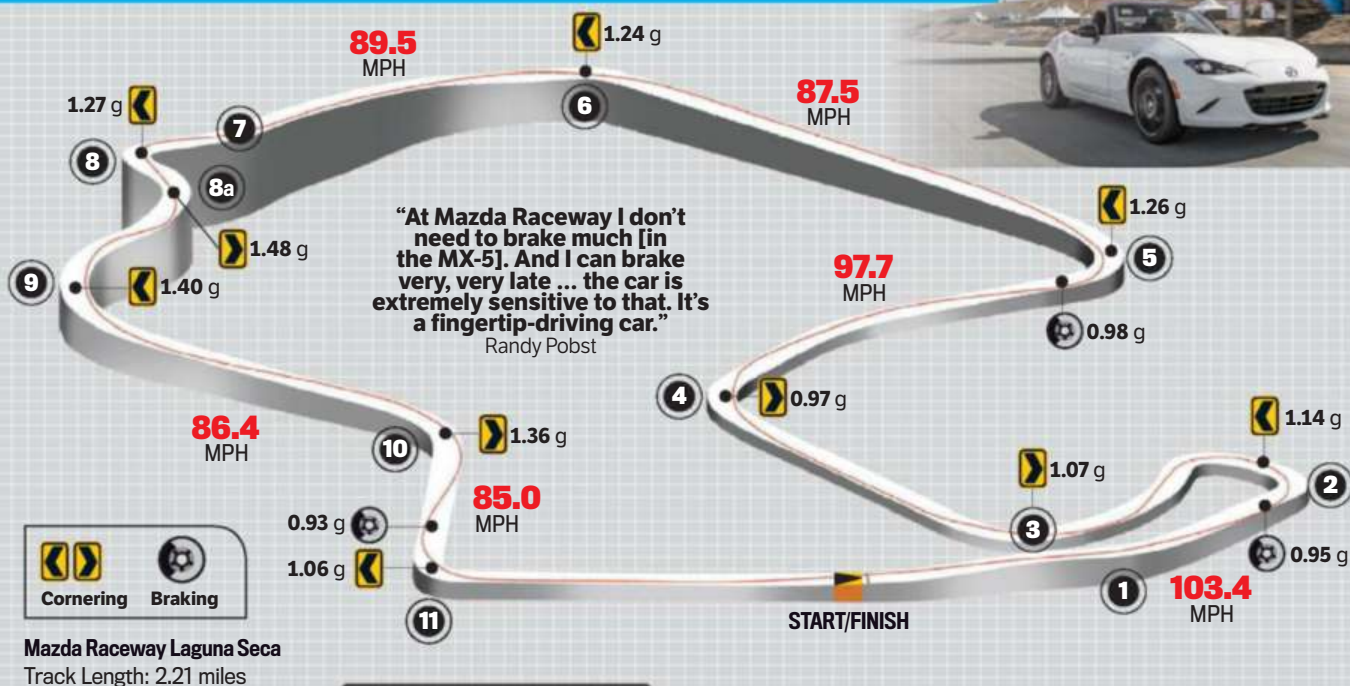
FAN FRIENDLY
Updated for modern times yet familiar in feel and layout, the Miata helm provided the start for many a racing career.



"You get in and drive. It's always in Sport mode."

Scott Evans, associate editor

103



LAP TIME:

min sec 1/10
01 :50 .68

Busy body



DUCKING COVER With no plastic "beauty" cover adorning the I-4, accessing spark plugs is that much easier in the Mazda MX-5.

There are just two drive modes for the MX-5: top up or top down.

"You get in and drive," Evans said. "It's always in Sport mode."

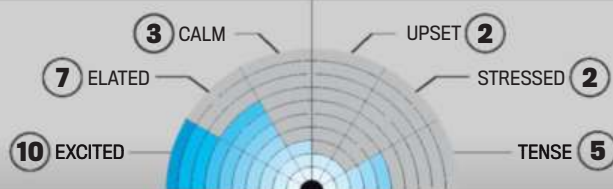
Everyone praised the very precise steering, which was best handled by holding the wheel lightly with your fingertips, and the six-speed manual transmission for its quick, easy throws. The chassis provides lots of driver feedback, so when

pushing the MX-5 to the edge, it's easy to pull it back. It was the most tossable car in the bunch, which is why it finished third overall.

The MX-5's weakest link is the suspension. The body rolls heavily through high-speed corners, the car can be almost too tail-happy, and there's not as much lateral grip as you may expect on a car meant to tame a canyon's twisty trail.

"The suspension's just a tad too soft; while the ride is terrific, the MX-5 rolls and dives more than it should," MacKenzie said. "And the brakes weren't up to the task at Mazda Raceway."

The track did exploit some of the MX-5's weaknesses. The big elevation changes and hard corners at MRLS require lots of power and big brakes for great times. The MX-5's 1:50.68 time was the slowest of the group.



Attention 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Happiness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Breathing Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Torso Load

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Heart Rate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Skin Temperature

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stress Level

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Steering Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

DR. CRUZ: "There were periods of very high attention, possibly due to issues with the pedals, but also high happiness when exiting turns." Randy's physically busy in this car—look at his steering activity and breathing and heart rates.

Its body roll becomes even more exaggerated at high speeds, making it harder to control and creating too much oversteer. But Pobst said drivers need to adjust to the MX-5 more than it needs to adjust to them. "Actually, the Miata kind of drives itself," he said. "A light touch on the steering, light touch on the brakes,

and the better I got at that, the faster the car went and the better it all felt."

Although the numbers didn't add up to a win, the MX-5's overall performance put it on the podium. "Driving the MX-5 top down on a winding road is an unalloyed joy," MacKenzie said. "This is how driving a sports car used to be." **Scott Burgess**





It's been two decades since the debut of Porsche's modern mid-engine sports car, and Porsche conspiracy theorists have maintained that Porsche would never build one with 911 horsepower because it would prove, once and for all, that the 911's rear-engine layout was wrong all along.

It's reckoning time. The GT4 isn't just a Cayman with the 7,800-rpm,

3.8-liter flat-six from the 911 Carrera S. It also inherits its complete front end from the 911 GT3, replete with that track monster's (optional) carbon-ceramic brakes. These front rotors are larger than the wheels on the original Boxster.

You hear glorious mechanical noises coming from the flat-six that sits inches behind you—whirring, spinning, and rattling loud enough that at least one editor thought

Rev this melodic powertrain to redline three gears in a row, and you'll risk handcuffs.

something was wrong. Yet it's all completely drowned out at full throttle when deafening intake honk conspires with roaring exhaust to produce some of the most musical sounds in the automotive universe.

The flat-six revs like it has no flywheel at all, making blip-throttle three-gear downshifts a mere flick of the ankle away; dropping 50 mph on the way into a corner is as simple as breathing on the center pedal.



PERFECT WEIGHTING

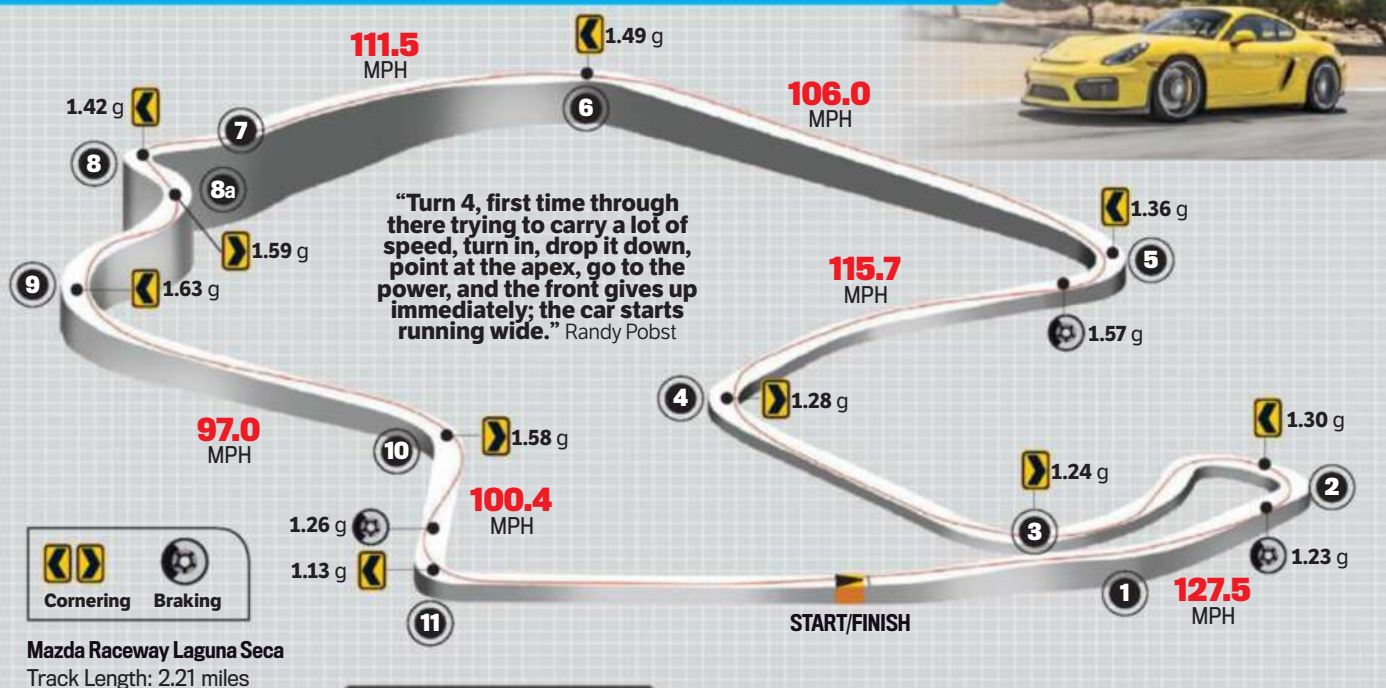
Like the steering, the six-speed shifter has perfect weighting and zero play, and the clutch's friction material somehow makes it impossible not to be smooth.



"The finest manual-transmission shift feel in the business."

102

Angus MacKenzie, editor at large



LAP TIME:

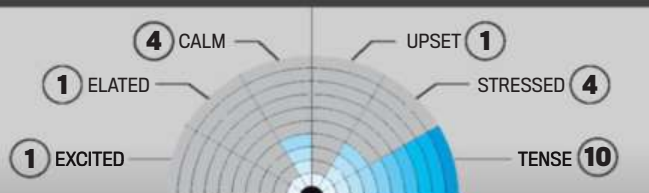
min 01 sec 37 1/10 43

High expectations, lots of tension

transmission shift feel in the business," but then Lieberman brings up a fine point, asking, "What's the point of a manual-only car that doesn't need to be shifted?"

With a second gear good for 82 indicated mph, you could leave it in second and forget about it. Long ratios decimate its 0-60 time, which would drop into the mid-3s if the GT4 had ratios similar to other six-speed manuals. Loh describes the transmission as "the Fuji apple of manual gearboxes: sweet, crisp, delicious." Too bad the gears turn it into forbidden fruit. Rev this melodic powertrain to redline three gears in a row, and you'll risk handcuffs.

Then there's the understeer issue. Although we feared the mid-engine Cayman might experience traction problems at its rear end with the 911's motor in the middle,



Attention 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Happiness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Breathing Rate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Torso Load 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Heart Rate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Skin Temperature 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Stress Level 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Steering Activity 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

DR. CRUZ: "This is the most demanding car for Randy, and the most race car. Nevertheless, he's not too pleased due to a number of issues." His happiness score is a 1? This is relative to his high expectations going in.

DOUBLE TEAM Yes, there's a wing and a spoiler. And yes, the Porsche Cayman GT4 can go fast enough to warrant both their presences.

Pobst says these brakes are among the best he's ever felt.

Several words show up repeatedly in the editors' comments: perfect, wonderful, devilish, racy, beautiful, phenomenal, the best, the finest, and "I'm in love." Yet there are two others that show up just as often: "understeer" and "gearing."

First, gearing. It may offer, as MacKenzie put it, "the finest manual-

our GT4 actually demonstrated a marked lack of front-end grip. It understeered both on the road and on track, even after we sent it back to Porsche to fix an alignment issue. The issue persisted even with the anti-roll bars adjusted to favor oversteer. This kind of cornering attitude is something you just don't see in

Porsche sports cars—much less in Porsche GT cars—so we assume it was a problem with our car.

Neither issue was enough to make us fall out of love with the GT4. But the two combined meant that there was another car that we loved more. Or maybe the conspiracy theorists were right. **Jason Cammis**

:01

BEST DRIVER'S CAR

Mercedes-AMG GT S

The Best Sports Car Mercedes Has Ever Built



If this isn't the definitive everyday supercar, then what is?





"I need a cigarette, and I don't even smoke. What a phenomenal car."

Scott Evans, associate editor

101

**BEST
DRIVER'S
CAR**



REDEMPTION We're sure the SLS AMG Black Series' second-place finish in BDC 2013 still stung in Affalterbach. The follow-up is spectacular.



The 2016 Mercedes-AMG GT S in about 750 words? Let's start with these: exclusive, luxurious, sensuous, quick, nimble, versatile, and in the right hands a track-ready supercar capable of lap times that don't seem possible considering its versatility and second-place road-test performance results. So what makes GT S, a car seemingly too stylish to be taken seriously, such a singularly special supercar or definitive driver's car? The never-flinching Animal from Affalterbach fights above its class—and wins—consistently and decisively.

First, that engine. We auto scribes never thought AMG could again conjure a powerplant with the personality, potency, and tractability of the naturally aspirated, 6.2-liter V-8 (M156/M159) we've enshrined in

the Engine of the Gods temple. Yet the boffins at AMG have outdone themselves with the M178, and in no other application is it better showcased. The twin-turbo, 4.0-liter V-8 produces an impressive and wholly accessible 503 hp and 479 lb-ft of torque at a mere 1,750 rpm. Its throttle response, glorious noise (Markus described it as a

"rifle-shot report from the exhaust on overrun"), and a torque plateau as flat and monumental as a Utah mesa have begotten a new era in engine design, performance, and efficiency. That quick-acting throttle is due in part to the placement of the turbos within the V, thus shortening intake and turbo plumbing. The M178 sounds, behaves, and feels unlike any turbocharged (or

supercharged) engine has.

Combine that engine with the AMG Speedshift seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission, launch control, and optional active powertrain mounts, and the GT S rockets to 60 mph in just 3.5 seconds (or 0.2 second behind the 592-hp Bentley and 650-hp Corvette). Yet the GT S earned more than 20 mpg combined in our Real MPG testing,

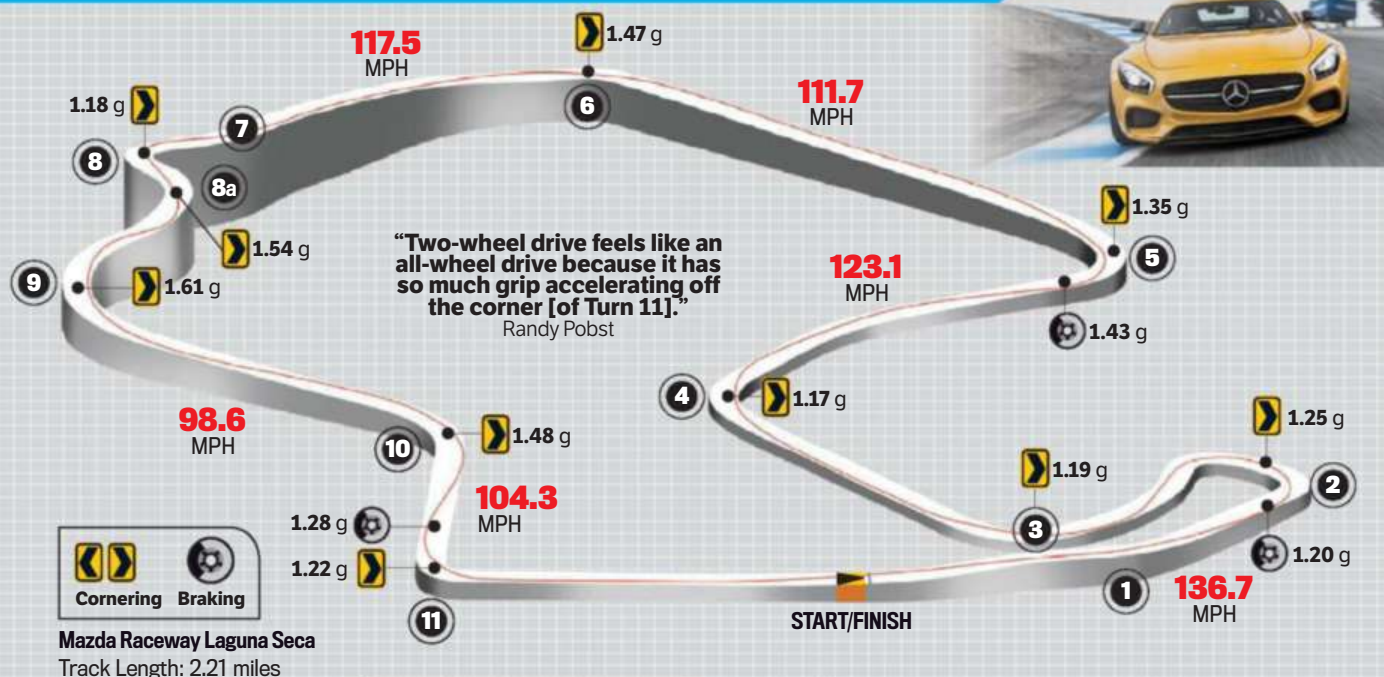




"I don't know if I have ever driven a better-handling car. I love it that much."

Randy Pobst, professional racer

01



LAP TIME:

min 01 :35 .57

A real heart-pounder



HABITUAL ABUSE We're 99.9 percent certain the V-8's exhaust stream contains both greenhouse gases and euphoria-inducing drugs.

and MacKenzie noted that it's capable of "sleepily slurring the upshifts at just 1,200 rpm on a light throttle" in Comfort mode.

On Route 198, the GT S was without dispute the car that inspired the most confidence and encouraged all levels of drivers to push on, as if saying, "Yeah, we got this." In fact, Loh was "breathless" after his stint on 198. It's the right size with the right amount of power, balance, and brakes to devour a road like that. Twisting up and down that road has a way of pointing out vehicle flaws you don't see in an urban setting. So when Cammisa said the GT S had the "best automatic transmission Sport mode programming here by a mile," it means somebody in Germany took the time to calibrate the AMG GT S for exactly this type of road.

Assertive steering and trustworthy front-end bite are commensurate with its tenacious grip. Unlike in some other cars here, grip followed all the way to the rear, giving the GT S unflappable poise over rough spots that upset other cars. Lieberman purposely aimed for the bumps. "I had no fear whatsoever that the suspension would not be able to handle them." Some felt the Race setting's damper firmness proved flinty and the steering a bit frenetic for public roads; they found either Sport or Sport+ more subdued and better suited to unpredictable surface changes.

Despite not being the most expensive, powerful, widest, grippiest, or purpose-built machine for barnstorming, the AMG GT S truly proved its mettle in Race mode on the racetrack. With all systems primed for peak performance and a smooth, familiar track at his disposal, Pobst put down the quickest laps of the day. "I don't know if I have ever driven a better-handling car," he said as he got out. "I love it that much." He went out of his way to extoll how well the rear-wheel-drive AMG GT S was able to put the power down to the track's surface. "It felt like it had downforce—like it was all-wheel drive." He was on to something because his 1:35.57 lap time landed it directly between two



DR. CRUZ: "Average to high attention with strong moments of elation with its handling. He's clearly very happy with this car." Two results jump out here: the look of excitement on his face and a very high heart rate.

all-wheel-drive cars: the Nissan GT-R NISMO at 1:35.51 and a Porsche 911 Turbo S at 1:35.62.

By the end of the program, it grew obvious that the AMG GT S was greater than the sum of its parts. Part Palm Springs weekend getaway car, part mountain road menace, part track star, and wholly incomparable.

Burgess proposed an experiment. "I challenge anyone to drive the AMG GT S and not get out with a smile on your face. Incredible." Evans went even further. "I need a cigarette, and I don't even smoke. What a phenomenal car." If that's not the definition of an everyday supercar, then what is?

Chris Walton



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Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca Lap Times

Every car we've hot-lapped, fastest first

VEHICLE	TIME	ENGINE	TRANS	TIRES
2015 Porsche 918 Spyder "Alice"	1:29.89	4.6L V-8, f&r elect motors	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2
2015 McLaren P1	1:30.71	3.8L twin-turbo V-8, elect motor	7 twin-clutch	Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R
2015 Porsche 918 Spyder "Meredith"	1:30.97	4.6L V-8, f&r elect motors	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2
2014 SRT Viper TA	1:33.62	8.4L V-10	6M	Pirelli P Zero Corsa
2013 Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	1:33.70	6.2L s'charged V-8	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup
2013 SRT Viper GTS	1:34.23	8.4L V-10	6M	Pirelli P Zero Corsa
2012 Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (Z07 package)	1:34.43	70L V-8	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup
2012 McLaren MP4-12C	1:34.50	3.8L twin-turbo V-8	7 twin-clutch	Pirelli P Zero Corsa
2013 SRT Viper	1:34.63	8.4L V-10	6M	Pirelli P Zero Corsa
2014 Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	1:35.03	6.2L V-8	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2
2008 Dodge Viper ACR	1:35.12	8.4L V-10	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup
2013 SRT Viper	1:35.37	8.4L V-10	6M	Pirelli P Zero
2012 Lamborghini Aventador	1:35.40	6.5L V-12	7 auto-clutch	Pirelli P Zero Corsa
2011 Nissan GT-R Nismo	1:35.51	3.8L twin-turbo V-6	6 twin-clutch	Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT 600 DSST
2016 Mercedes-AMG GT S (2015 BDC winner)	1:35.57	4.0L twin-turbo V-8	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2
2014 Porsche 911 Turbo S	1:35.62	3.8L twin-turbo F-6	7 twin-clutch	Dunlop Sport Maxx Race
2013 SRT Viper GTS	1:35.78	8.4L V-10	6M	Pirelli P Zero
2009 Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	1:35.83	6.2L s'charged V-8	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport 2
2010 Ferrari 458 Italia (2011 BDC winner)	1:36.22	4.5L V-8	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Sport K1
2013 Nissan GT-R Black Edition	1:36.30	3.8L twin-turbo V-6	7 twin-clutch	Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT 600 DSST CTT
2012 Nissan GT-R	1:36.35	3.8L twin-turbo V-6	7 twin-clutch	Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT 600 DSST CTT
2012 Audi R8 GT	1:36.39	5.2L V-10	6 auto-clutch	Pirelli P Zero Corsa
2012 Lexus LFA	1:36.39	4.8L V-10	6 auto-clutch	Bridgestone Potenza S001
2013 SRT Viper	1:36.43	8.4L V-10	6M	Pirelli P Zero Corsa
2014 Nissan GT-R Track Pack	1:36.63	3.8L twin-turbo V-6	6 twin-clutch	Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT 600 DSST CTT
2011 Porsche GT3 RS	1:36.77	3.8L F-6	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup
2016 Porsche Cayman GT4	1:37.43	3.8L F-6	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2
2014 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 (2014 BDC winner)	1:37.82	70L V-8	6M	Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R
2013 Ferrari F12	1:38.04	6.3L V-12	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Super Sport K2
2014 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Z51	1:38.28	6.2L V-8	7M	Michelin Pilot Super Sport ZP
2016 Cadillac CTS-V Sedan	1:38.52	6.2L s'charged V-8	8A	Michelin Pilot Super Sport
2015 Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (Z07)*	1:38.60	6.2L s'charged V-8	7M	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2
2013 Ford Shelby GT500	1:38.70	5.8L s'charged V-8	6M	Goodyear Eagle F1 Supercar G:2
2014 Audi R8 V10 Plus	1:38.70	5.2L V-10	7 twin-clutch	Pirelli P Zero
2012 Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1:38.82	6.2L V-8	7 twin-clutch	Continental ContiSportContact 5P
2012 Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	1:38.90	6.2L V-8	7A	Dunlop Sport Maxx Race MO
2013 Porsche 911 Carrera 4S	1:39.00	3.8L F-6	7 twin-clutch	Pirelli P Zero
2013 Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (2013 BDC winner)	1:39.19	3.8L F-6	7 twin-clutch	Pirelli P Zero
2012 Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	1:39.20	6.2L s'charged V-8	6M	Goodyear Eagle F1 Supercar G:2
2012 Porsche 911 Carrera S (2012 BDC winner)	1:39.30	3.8L F-6	7 twin-clutch	Pirelli P Zero
2007 Porsche 911 GT3 (2007 BHC winner*)	1:39.57	3.6L F-6	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup
2016 Cadillac ATS-V Coupe	1:39.65	3.6L twin-turbo V-6	8A	Michelin Pilot Super Sport
2015 BMW M4	1:39.69	3.0L twin-turbo I-6	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Super Sport
2016 Cadillac ATS-V Coupe	1:40.18	3.6L twin-turbo V-6	6M	Michelin Pilot Super Sport
2009 Nissan GT-R	1:40.45	3.8L twin-turbo V-6	7 twin-clutch	Dunlop SP Sport 600 DSST
2015 Mercedes-AMG C63 S Sedan	1:40.50	4.0L twin-turbo V-8	7A	Michelin Pilot Super Sport
2013 BMW M6	1:40.52	4.4L twin-turbo V-8	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Super Sport
2014 Aston Martin Vanquish	1:40.71	5.9L V-12	6A	Pirelli P Zero
2009 Audi R8 (2008 BHC winner*)	1:40.75	4.2L V-8	6M	Pirelli P Zero
2014 Jaguar F-Type V8 S	1:40.81	5.0L s'charged V-8	8A	Pirelli P Zero
2006 Chevrolet Corvette Z06	1:40.92	70L V-8	6M	Goodyear Eagle F1 Supercar
2009 Audi R8	1:40.92	4.2L V-8	6 auto-clutch	Pirelli P Zero
2012 Ford Mustang Boss 302 Laguna Seca	1:41.06	5.0L V-8	6M	Pirelli P Zero Corsa
2014 Porsche Cayman S	1:41.26	3.4L F-6	7 twin-clutch	Pirelli P Zero
2012 Porsche Cayman R	1:41.64	3.4L F-6	7 twin-clutch	Bridgestone Potenza RE050A
2015 Jaguar F-Type R Coupe	1:42.01	5.0L s'charged V-8	8A	Pirelli P Zero
2014 Mercedes-Benz E63 S AMG Wagon	1:42.39	5.5L twin-turbo V-8	7A	Continental ContiSportContact 5P
2011 Lotus Evora S	1:42.49	3.5L s'charged V-6	6M	Pirelli P Zero Corsa
2008 Porsche 911 Turbo	1:42.51	3.6L twin-turbo F-6	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport PS2
2012 Jaguar XKR-S	1:42.86	5.0L s'charged V-8	6A	Pirelli P Zero
2009 Porsche Cayman S (2009 BDC winner)	1:42.95	3.4L F-6	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Sport
2008 BMW M3	1:42.96	4.0L V-8	7 twin-clutch	Michelin Pilot Sport PS2
2015 Lexus RC F	1:43.20	5.0L V-8	8A	Michelin Pilot Super Sport
2011 BMW 1 Series M	1:43.31	3.0L twin-turbo I-6	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport PS2
2014 Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Edition 507	1:43.49	6.2L V-8	7A	Continental ContiSportContact 5P
2015 Bentley Continental GT3-R	1:43.51	4.0L twin-turbo V-8	8A	Pirelli P Zero
2013 Audi RS 5	1:43.60	4.2L V-8	7 twin-clutch	Pirelli P Zero
2015 Alfa Romeo 4C	1:43.78	1.7L turbo I-4	6 twin-clutch	Pirelli P Zero AR Racing
2009 Cadillac CTS-V	1:43.85	6.2L s'charged V-8	6A	Michelin Pilot Sport
2015 BMW i8	1:44.29	1.5L turbo I-3, f&r elect motors	6A	Bridgestone Potenza S001
2010 Ford Shelby GT500	1:44.32	5.4L s'charged V-8	6M	Goodyear Eagle F1
2008 Shelby GT500KR	1:44.72	5.4L s'charged V-8	6M	Goodyear Eagle F1 Supercar
2009 Jaguar XFR	1:45.37	5.0L s'charged V-8	6A	Dunlop SP Sport Maxx
2010 Chevrolet Camaro SS	1:45.72	6.2L V-8	6M	Pirelli P Zero
2007 Lotus Exige S	1:45.82	1.8L s'charged I-4	6M	Yokohama Advan A048
2009 BMW 135i	1:46.01	3.0L twin-turbo I-6	6M	Bridgestone Potenza
2010 Nissan NISMO 370Z	1:46.53	3.7L V-6	6M	Yokohama Advan Sport
2013 Bentley Continental GT Speed	1:46.60	6.0L twin-turbo W-12	8A	Pirelli P Zero
2015 Volkswagen Golf R	1:46.95	2.0L turbo I-4	6 twin-clutch	Bridgestone Potenza RE050A
2015 Subaru WRX STI	1:47.16	2.5L turbo F-4	6M	Dunlop Sport Maxx RT
2006 Porsche Cayman S	1:47.58	3.4L F-6	6M	Michelin Pilot Sport PS2
2008 Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X MR	1:47.71	2.0L turbo I-4	6 twin-clutch	Yokohama Advan AIE
2008 Chevrolet Cobalt SS	1:47.75	2.0L turbo I-4	5M	Continental SportContact 2
2007 Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX MR	1:47.93	2.0L turbo I-4	6M	Yokohama Advan A046
2007 BMW 335i	1:49.04	3.0L twin-turbo I-6	6M	Bridgestone Potenza RE050A RFT
2013 Ford Focus ST	1:49.30	2.0L turbo I-4	6M	Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 2
2015 Volkswagen GTI	1:50.11	2.0L turbo I-4	6 twin-clutch	Bridgestone Potenza S001
2007 Mazdaspeed3 GT	1:50.37	2.3L turbo I-4	6M	Bridgestone Potenza RE050A
2009 Mazda RX-8	1:50.42	1.3L 2-rotor Wankel	6M	Bridgestone Potenza RE050A
2016 Mazda MX-5 (Club)	1:50.68	2.0L I-4	6M	Bridgestone Potenza S001
2006 Honda S2000	1:50.74	2.2L I-4	6M	Bridgestone Potenza RE050
2013 Tesla Model S P85+	1:50.79	Induction AC electric	1A	Michelin Pilot Sport PS2
2014 Ford Fiesta ST	1:51.25	1.6L turbo I-4	6M	Bridgestone Potenza RE050A
2013 Subaru BRZ	1:51.30	2.0L F-4	6M	Michelin Primacy HP
2007 Mini Cooper S JC Works GP	1:51.73	1.6L s'charged I-4	6M	Dunlop SP Sport 01 DSST
2008 Mini Cooper S	1:51.98	1.6L turbo I-4	6M	Dunlop SP Sport 01
2009 Mazda MX-5 Miata	1:52.18	2.0L I-4	6M	Bridgestone Potenza RE050A
2006 Honda Civic Si	1:54.99	2.0L I-4	6M	Michelin Pilot Exalto
1990 Mazda MX-5 Miata	1:56.92	1.6L I-4	5M	Dunlop Direzza ZII

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Developed to provide ice and snow traction similar to studded winter tires without using studs, these tires typically trade high-speed ratings and some handling responsiveness for enhanced snow and ice traction.



PERFORMANCE WINTER / SNOW

Developed as high-speed winter tires for European driving conditions, these tires typically trade some deep snow and ice traction for enhanced dry and wet road traction, handling and high-speed capability.

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Words Jason Cammisa

#THROWBACK RACEDAY

JAGUAR BUILDS SIX BRAND-NEW
1964 E-TYPE TIME MACHINES





The auto industry is so convinced of its own progress that it only ever looks backward to point out how much better something is than whatever it replaced. Better torsional rigidity! Better flame propagation under low-load conditions! Better thermal efficiency from the door-lock actuators!

Better my left foot. But finally some car companies are starting to use their rearview mirrors for good, and Jaguar has rocketed straight past Throwback Thursday child's play and is brave enough to produce a whole Throwback Car.

The story of the Jaguar Lightweight E-type begins in February 1963, when Jaguar announced it would build 18 E-types for racing. Only 12 were built, likely due to a lack of demand because the E-type didn't decimate its Grand Prix competitors the way the C- and D-types had in the previous decade.

Like all the best ideas to come out of England, the plan to manufacture the six



remaining Lightweights was hatched in a pub. And like all alcohol-soaked plans, making it a reality would prove a tremendous amount of work. Jaguar Land Rover has invested some 50,000 man-hours in re-creating the body and chassis alone, as it was only interested in producing the six missing cars if they were identical to the original 12 in design, construction, and materials. There would be no computer-aided engineering enhancements. No modern metals. These six Lightweight E-types would be as true to the

originals as the originals were to one another.

But keep in mind those weren't necessarily true to each other. Made in the days before computer-aided everything, each was slightly different to begin with, and Jaguar strengthened the later cars where the earlier ones had problems. The "new" E-types are based mostly on the specification of the last original Lightweight.

The result is a car with about one-sixth the torsional rigidity of an F-Type but with everything it needs to earn FIA homologation

COPY CAT The original E-type lightweight (above left) was an aluminum-bodied E-type convertible wearing an awkward hard top and produced strictly for racing. The new E-type is exactly the same.



There is no carpet or headliner. It has no stereo. Sound deadening? Surely you jest. The cabin is filled with little more than the stench of gasoline and fear.

as a historic continuation race car. And as you approach one, the first thing you notice is how tiny it is. The E-type is impossibly narrow (66.9 inches) and comically low (46.5 inches), and even still, Jaguar's quoted weight of a shade under 2,300 pounds seems unlikely until you open the door. It feels as though it's made of tissue paper. It has no window crank; the Perspex is held in place with a small wedge that's, uh, wedged between it and the door frame. There's no interior door release, either, just a sheathed cable draped inside one of the openings. It may be a work of art, but it's also a race car. There is no carpet or headliner. It has no stereo. Sound deadening? Surely you jest. The cabin is filled with little more than the stench of gasoline and fear.

With a push of a button, the 3,868cc straight-six coughs to life and settles into a slightly rough cold idle. The pedal box is wide enough for shoes—just—and though there's a little vagueness to the linkage, the machined aluminum shifter finds each of the four gears right where you'd expect them to be. Setting off requires a little concentration because of the insanely long gearing, with first good for an indicated 80 mph. Luckily, the clutch is light and easy to modulate, and the big six absolutely refuses to stall. Its pistons are, after all, moving through an enormous 106mm stroke.

The steering snaps to life the second you start moving, and effort builds at what feels like the cube of cornering force. The unassisted system is wonderfully communicative about the front end even though much of what you feel is the entire chassis flexing.

And then you lay into the loud pedal.

This machine's acoustic footprint is audible

LOW RIDER It looks imposing, but the Lightweight is tiny. It's 2 feet longer than the new Miata but 1.4 inches narrower and 2.1 inches lower. And in case you were wondering where the Miata's taillight design came from ...

Jaguar E-type Lightweight (Continuation Model)

BASE PRICE	\$1,600,000 (est.)
VEHICLE LAYOUT	Front-engine, RWD, 2-pass, 2-door coupe
ENGINE	3.9L/340-hp/280-lb-ft DOHC 12-valve I-6
TRANSMISSION	4-speed manual
CURB WEIGHT	2,300 lb (mfr)
WHEELBASE	96.1 in
L X W X H	175.3 x 66.9 x 46.5 in
0-60 MPH	4.5 sec (MT est)
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB FUEL ECON	Not rated
ON SALE IN U.S.	Currently

proof that there's something deeply wrong with our world. Today's cars are engineered as isolation chambers first then tweaked to selectively reintroduce various frequencies and resonances. The E-type is nothing like this. There is no flatulent, contrived exhaust bellow that comes and goes as a computer opens and closes a bypass flap in the muffler. There are no speakers piping in artificial engine sounds. There is neither silly intake tube nor cowl-mounted vibrator to replicate intake noise. In fact, it's as difficult

to differentiate the sound of the exhaust from the mechanical noise as it is to identify the individual instruments playing in a symphony. If great-sounding modern cars (even Jaguars) are the distorted, shallow racket your iPhone reproduces, the E-type is the entire London Symphony Orchestra. On '60s-grade LSD. Having an orgy. Today's cars make noise. The Lightweight makes music.

Oh, and it's very fast, too. The mechanically fuel-injected DOHC six is happiest at full throttle, pulling to six grand with an unexpected fury. Its 340 hp isn't a lot these days, but there's no modern car with this kind of power and such light weight. The 3,000-pound, 385-hp Porsche Cayman GT4 comes up about 60 hp short of matching the Lightweight's weight-to-power ratio.

The brakes are unassisted discs all around, inboard at the rear, and require a healthy hoof, but the Lightweight really blows your mind in the corners. This E-type shrugs off trail-braking like nothing you've experienced.





Today's cars make noise. The Lightweight makes music.

With the front wheels loaded, the E-type turns in like it's got front tires as wide as a Camaro Z/28's, and the rear end follows faithfully without even a threat of snapping out.

Mid-corner, as the period Dunlop racing tires start to squeal, the E-type settles into moderate understeer. That ends the second you're under power. The Powr-Lok rear differential helps the car become throttle-steerable in a way that redefines what throttle-steerable means today. The tires also help—they don't break away; they smear away, rolling under themselves and going all gooey. Contrast this with how modern tires break loose—more akin to ripping off the top layer of asphalt and

exposing a substrate of glare ice.

The engine metes out power in increments so perfectly in tune to the angle of your right ankle that you'd almost think there were a mechanical connection between the two.

Modern cars, with their nonlinear electronic accelerator pedals, are programmed to fool people into thinking their car is peppier than it actually is. The relationship between the Jag's pedal and power is so linear and the engine's response so quick that you feel as though horsepower comes in hundredths. Every single bit of this car helps you obtain and maintain a subtle drift through every

inch of every corner. If all cars were like this, your neighborhood old lady would drift her Prius through each intersection.

First gear comes to a very abrupt 6,000-rpm end as the speedo bounds toward 80 mph. Second is stacked right on top of first and lasts what feels like only a beat, as it's time to shift again at around 100 mph—though it's hard to tell exactly how quickly you're traveling because the speedometer bounces in 30-mph swings as you accelerate. Third is also very closely spaced and should yank the lightweight beauty to about 130 mph, leaving the fourth and final gear to achieve top speed, somewhere north of a buck-fifty.

The Lightweight is, after all, an E-type, one of the most beautiful cars of all time. But when driven in anger, this car goes from a beautiful piece of art to a rolling, screaming, sideways chance to step back in time and realize that progress isn't always progress. At a million-six, it's the cheapest time machine ever. ■



COMPETING FORCES This special F-Type has extensive modifications to help rear-end grip. And 575 horses worth of motivation to undo all of it.

JAGUAR SVO'S First Project Is an Exercise in Excess

The Project 7 is the first vehicle from Jaguar's Special Vehicle Operations (SVO). Named for Jaguar's seven Le Mans wins, the F-Type-based Project 7 takes visual cues from the D-type racers. It has no roof, just a "canopy" that stores in the trunk and fools you into thinking it's usable in the rain. At its 186-mph top speed, the carbon-fiber body kit and rear spoiler nearly double the downforce of the regular F-Type.

Just 250 units will be produced, and only 50 for the U.S. Jaguar quotes a 99-pound weight reduction from the regular F-Type, but that includes lightweight carbon-fiber buckets we won't get.

U.S.-bound 7s also do without the lowered speedster windshield. You can blame (or thank) our safety standards for those omissions.

Luckily our government doesn't have a problem with cars that produce enough power to blow apart tectonic plates. The rear-drive F-Type is already overwhelmed by its 550-hp V-8, so naturally SVO gave this one 25 additional frackin' horsepower. SVO then installed upgraded hardware and software into the F-Type's new-for-2016 electrically assisted power steering. It's still not as good as the old hydraulic setup. To help tame the F-Type's tendency for oversteer, Project 7 gets an

80 percent bump in front spring rate and an additional degree of negative camber up front. The rear tires still have no chance of coping with all of the V-8's thrust, but this F-Type allows at least some throttle before it's aimed straight ahead. If you're very delicate, you can almost accelerate smoothly out of a corner without exploding sideways.

The F-Type is a stunning car, the Project 7 even more so. Forget about the \$165,925 base price. That'll pale in comparison to the fines you'll rack up for speeding, reckless driving, and of course replacing the rear tires every two weeks. Sounds just like an F-Type, only better. **JC**

2016 Jaguar F-Type Project 7

Base Price \$165,925 **Vehicle Layout** Front-engine, RWD, 2-pass, 2-door convertible **Engine** 5.0L/575-hp/516-lb-ft supercharged DOHC 32-valve V-8 **Transmission** 8-speed automatic **Curb Weight** 3,600 lb (mfr) **Wheelbase** 103.2 in **L X W X H** 178.3 x 75.7 x 51.5 in **0-60 MPH** 3.8 sec (mfr est) **EPA City/Hwy/Comb Fuel Econ** Not yet rated **On Sale In U.S.** Sold out

SPECIAL BONUS CONTENT



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**A LOOK BACK AT INFINITI'S
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Q60 AND QX30 CONCEPT

INFINITI'S Q60 AND QX30 CONCEPT VEHICLES EMBODY EMPOWERMENT, EXPRESSION, AND EVOLUTIONARY DESIGN WHICH ALLUDES TO AN INNOVATIVE FUTURE.

NATURAL SYMBOLISM is noticeable throughout the details and curves of the sport coupe: a double-arch grille evocative of a bridge stretching over water and focused headlights inspired by the human eye.



INFINITI VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE

INFINITI PROVIDES GUESTS WITH UNIQUE VIRTUAL REALITY TEST DRIVES.



TECHNOLOGY EXPERTS were on hand to transport participants to some of the world's most exciting roads around the world, using a virtual reality experience, combining a headset with real-world physics and movement to place them behind the wheel of the Q60 Concept and the QX30 Concept.



SPECIAL BONUS CONTENT

EIGHT LUXURY INFINITI VEHICLES were on-hand to allow attendees to experience Infiniti performance for themselves. Included were the Q50 Sport Sedan, Q60 Convertible, and the QX80 Limited.

INFINITI RIDE AND DRIVE



INFINITI VIP PARTY

ON SATURDAY EVENING, August 15th, *Motor Trend* and Infiniti came together to host a private party with a special performance by internationally-acclaimed musical guest Vintage Trouble.

GUESTS ENJOYED beautiful weather, incredible music, and luxurious hospitality, amid a backdrop of stunning automotive perfection.





PEBBLE BEACH CONCOURS d'ELEGANCE HIGHLIGHTS

THE FINEST AUTOMOBILES IN THE WORLD HAVE BEEN CELEBRATED HERE FOR 65 YEARS.



ONE OF the top-ranking collector car competitions in the world, the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance is not a contest of speed, but of historical accuracy, technical merit, and style.



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MOST INTRIGUING CARS DURING CAR WEEK

HOW TO CHOOSE FROM ALL OF THE AMAZING
VEHICLES AT PEBBLE BEACH? VERY CAREFULLY.



**1938 ALFA ROMEO 8C 2900B TOURING
BERLINETTA COUPE** In the last 10 years, this beauty won six Best of Show awards, including Pebble Beach 2008.

1953 FERRARI 250 Europa Vignale Coupe



1952 PORSCHE 356
Pre-A Coupe: Amidst all the glitter at The Quail, this was the only unrestored barn find on the lawn.

1937 DELAHAYE 145 Franay Roadster Art deco bodywork belies a chassis that began life as a 12-cylinder Grand Prix racer.

1949 MERCURY 9CM SAM BARRIS CUSTOM COUPE
The first Mercury coupe "chop top" was so dramatic it ended up on the December 1951 of *Motor Trend*.





THE QUAIL HIGHLIGHTS

THE QUAIL, A MOTORSPORTS GATHERING, OCCURRED FOR THE 13TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR, WITH ENTHUSIASTS REVELING IN THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION OF RARE VEHICLES.



AS A PLATINUM SPONSOR, Infiniti hosted a large activation at *The Quail, A Motorsports Gathering*, within a custom-built hospitality lounge on the Practice Range of Quail Lodge and Golf Club. Guests were invited to explore the Q60 Concept and the exceptional Infiniti Red Bull Racing Show Car up-close while interacting with the Infiniti technology experience, and enjoying handcrafted Smitten Ice Cream.



BEST OF SHOW

OF ALL THE FANTASTIC AUTOMOBILES SEEN AND SHOWN, THERE ARE A FEW THAT SIMPLY RISE ABOVE THE REST.



JIM PATTERSON brought his Italian Isotta Fraschini Tipo 8A Cabriolet all the way from Louisville, Kentucky to win Best of Show at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.



ITALIAN ISOTTA FRASCHINI TIPO 8A CABRIOLET



THIS STUNNING 1968 Alfa Romeo Tipo 33 Stradale owned by Mouse Motors in Illinois won top honors at *The Quail*.



1968 ALFA ROMEO
TIPO 33 STRADALE



NO LASERS FOR YOU Audi is proud of its powerful laser high-beams, which allow you to safely drive daytime speeds at night. Current U.S. regulations don't allow them, but Audi's working on it.



Words Scott Evans

THE SECOND HIT IS ALWAYS THE HARDEST (Nailing) The Follow-Up Album



In the music industry, the only achievement more daunting than your first hit record is your second. Think on it a moment: How many times have you asked yourself, “Whatever happened to that band that had the huge hit a year or two ago?” The industry is rife with bands that hit it big only to slip quietly into the night when the follow-up failed to live up to the breakout debut. It even has a name: the “sophomore slump.”

The problem is less common in the automotive industry, but it still exists. The potential for the sophomore slump to strike is never higher than when building the second generation of an iconic car. Audi’s designers and engineers must’ve been acutely aware of this as they brought the all-new R8 into

existence. After all, the original is beautiful and contemporary to this day, and it’s had no trouble keeping up with newer competitors. The likelihood that Audi would fail to do the original justice ran higher than usual given the R8’s halo status and pop culture presence.

There were plenty of opportunities to go wrong. The biggest potential pitfall was on the outside. The original R8 was a gorgeous car, and I’ll be honest: My first impression of the new car hovered around disappointment. As seems to be an emerging trend with Audi’s latest styling language, though, it simply

doesn’t translate well in photographs. All the latest Audis need to be seen in person to really be appreciated, and the new R8 is no exception. The sharper, edgier design works harmoniously in natural light, and controversial elements such as the now-split side blade make more sense when you can walk around and see them from different angles. Then there’s the matter of how it drives. Audi made continual upgrades to the first-generation R8 that improved its handling and its comfort, and there’s further improvement to be found in the new car. The greatest is in the steering, a minefield to its engineers. All-wheel drive and an imperfect steering tune combine to rob the old car of nearly any steering feel and left it with an artificial lightness. The new car





PREDICTABILITY There's never a big kick from turbos coming on, but in return the R8's V-10 gives you predictable delivery of its 540 hp.

adds variable-ratio Dynamic Steering, which we criticized in its Lamborghini Huracán twin. Audi had the benefit of a later launch, which gave its engineers the opportunity to learn from the Huracán's troubles and fine-tune the system.

The verdict: bullet dodged. Audi's variable-ratio steering works as promised, with lighter effort and a slower ratio at low speed for easy maneuvering in tight spots and heavier effort with a faster ratio at high speeds, all with a linear progression from one end to the other. Audi even managed to find a small bit of road feel. No, it doesn't have the steering of an air-cooled 911, but it's a notable improvement over the old car and the Huracán.

A much stiffer chassis backed by standard magnetorheological shock absorbers helps. Given the stiffness of the chassis and the R8's unimpeachable composure, the ride quality is simply remarkable; Audi made the R8 go faster and handle better without diminishing the ride quality or the everyday livability.

And handle it does. On the road, the only thing to concern yourself with is the limits of the tires, and if you manage to find those on a public street, well, no one will pity you the consequences. Broken pavement and large bumps don't unsettle it in the least. One particularly nasty hidden mid-corner dip should've resulted in a big oversteer, but all the R8 gave was a slight twitch of the rear end. Then it was back to all grip, all the time.

This bears out on the track, as well. A sharp lift off the throttle early to mid-corner or a stab late-corner can provoke oversteer, but you only get a mild rotation before it hooks

Audi's sophomore R8 gives us more and better everything and takes almost nothing in return.

up, and a little counter-steer brings it right back in line. It's still relatively easy to provoke understeer, too, by getting greedy with the throttle too early in a corner, but you don't get as much as in the old car.

The revamped drivetrain helps enable this neutrality and composure. An electronically controlled clutch replaces the old viscous-coupling center differential, allowing much finer control of fore/aft power distribution and the ability to send all the power forward. Working with a mechanical limited-slip differential at the rear and a small amount of brake-based torque vectoring, the system always seems to know exactly where to put the power in the appropriate quantity.

And what power it is. The standard 5.2-liter V-10 is more powerful (540 hp, up from 525; 398 lb-ft, up from 391) while still delivering the same linear powerband we love and expect of a naturally aspirated engine. Deftly handling that power is an improved seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox clearly gunning for best-of-the-breed. Push hard, and upshifts and downshifts are as seamless as they are instantaneous. Slightly balky shifts can be provoked at low speeds if you come quickly on or off the throttle just as it's changing gear, but they're a nitpicky annoyance. Similarly,

the transmission, even in Dynamic mode, goes quickly for the higher gear rather than the performance gear and can hunt around a lot at times. It does it all swiftly and smoothly, though. Otherwise, it's nearly telepathic on both road and track, and if it happens to be a gear high, a slight squeeze of the throttle will correct it. You don't ever need to manually shift it, but it is fun.

And that's just the standard car. There's also the V10 Plus, which really gets you cooking with gas. An extra 70 hp, fixed-ratio dampers (not available during our test; magnetic shocks are optional), performance transmission gearing, and a special Performance driving mode conspire to make the R8 even more potent. You lose almost nothing while gaining substantially in performance.

The new R8 offers little to disparage. Slightly unusual controls, a mildly fussy transmission, and the nearly cliché lack of steering feel aren't damning, and the overall improvements outweigh those complaints. This is what makes it truly great. In Audi's sophomore R8, it's given us more and better everything and taken almost nothing in return. It's hard to ask for more than that. ■



2017 Audi R8	
BASE PRICE	\$150,000-180,000 (est)
VEHICLE LAYOUT	Mid-engine, AWD, 2-pass, 2-door coupe
ENGINES	5.2L/540-hp/398-lb-ft DOHC 40-valve V-10; 5.2L/610-hp/413-lb-ft DOHC 40-valve V-10
TRANSMISSION	7-speed twin-clutch auto
CURB WEIGHT	3,450 lb (mfr)
WHEELBASE	104.3 in
L X W X H	174.3 x 76.4 x 48.8 in
0-62 MPH	3.1-3.5 sec (mfr est)
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB FUEL ECON	13/25/19 mpg (est)
ENERGY CONSUMPTION, CITY/HWY	259/135 kW-hrs/100 miles (est)
CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB	1.17 lb/mile (est)
ON SALE IN U.S.	Spring 2016

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THE FORCE Awakens



Everyone loves a good underdog story—e.g., every “Star Wars” epic—but that’s not the feeling you get whatsoever with the hot-selling Tacoma. It’s not 1957 (Toyota’s first year in the U.S.); the Tacoma has developed a loyal and very interactive following. And we’re not in Hollywood, California, where Toyota originally set up shop in ‘57. No, today our boots have landed in Seattle, Washington, a stone’s throw from the city of Tacoma. Toyota has provided precisely six hours of access to drive, learn about, and photograph the 2016 Tacoma.



Hour 1 First impression: Sensations new and familiar envelop me upon sliding into the driver’s seat of a Barcelona Red Tacoma TRD Off-Road Double Cab. The 2016 model has been unified on one common chassis, whereas before the standard rear-drive truck

sat lower than the 4x4 and now-retired 4x2 PreRunner models. The commanding view of the road and traffic remains even though the pickup’s beltline has risen 0.4 inch and the greenhouse has slimmed.

In contrast to the Tacoma’s outgoing generation, you no longer climb in and then proceed to fall into the seat. The 2016 truck’s seat bottom is higher off the floor than before and doesn’t lift my knees up, which helps accentuate the feeling of newfound height. Photographer William Walker, at a huskier 6-foot-2, has to recline the seat back more than normal to clear his head.



**THE TOYOTA EMPIRE
STRIKES BACK AGAINST THE
SMALL-PICKUP MARKET**

Words Benson Kong
Photographs William Walker



The Tacoma conveys a much greater sense of solidity and refinement on the road.

WHAT CURRENT TACO OWNERS ACTUALLY CARE ABOUT

PROSPECTIVE 2016 Toyota Tacoma shoppers who have owned a Taco before and are looking to upgrade should note exactly three points. **FIRST**, the tailgate not only locks now but also incorporates a rotary damper for softened lowering. **SECOND**, an exterior-temperature gauge has been relocated to the cluster display, affixed on all but the base SR trim. The days of pestering the dealer for a HomeLink rearview mirror credit voucher are (hypothetically) over. **THIRD**, you'll still find 10-inch brake drums adorning the rear live axle.

We concur the tilt/telescope steering wheel doesn't tilt nearly high enough.

The reskinned interior now falls in line with the majority of Toyota's cars, meaning it feels at least two generations ahead of the second-gen truck. The components, the available gizmos, and the touch and feel of the materials, buttons, and switches should be more than enough to persuade a few Taco loyalists to come on down to Big Cal's Toyota Emporium and get the paperwork started.

Hour 2 I've spent the early part of the drive checking the V-6's redline. The new 2GR-FKS features 3.5 liters of displacement, 278 hp, and 265 lb-ft; has the latest version of Toyota's D-4S combination port- and direct-injection; and can simulate the efficiency-enhancing Atkinson cycle on demand with crafty, variable intake valve timing. The six-cylinder uses water-jacketed exhaust manifolds that have been integrated into the cylinder heads. Yet there I was, running it to its 6,200-rpm redline, which the six-speed automatic is happy to hold when I'm manually selecting gears; the relatively soft rev limiter is ideal for loose surfaces such as sand when you must keep the throttle pinned.

Hour 3 The hydraulically assisted power steering could be a dead ringer for the 2015 truck's. The steering ratios are identical (17.3:1 in the 4x4, 17.4:1 in the 4x2) and the snap back to center continues to be strong and fast. The previous model's steering effort would increase as it returned to center, but it's slightly less noticeable with the new model.

Now structurally more rigid and better sealed against the elements and noise, the Tacoma conveys a much greater sense of

solidity and refinement on the road. The cabin is certainly quieter. The new V-6 doesn't grunt along as coarsely as the old 4.0-liter V-6 with its 236 hp and 266 lb-ft did.

Speaking of ringers, even the brake pedal engagement is familiar. The bite point is near the top of the pedal's travel, making the brakes feel overly sensitive. A midgrade SR5 isn't as touchy.

Hour 4 An off-road venue affords a demonstration of TRD Off-Road's new-for-Tacoma Crawl Control, experienced before in the Land Cruiser, 4Runner, and (R.I.P.) FJ Cruiser. Activate the four-wheel-drive system's low range, choose the Crawl Control creep speed of 1-5 mph, and let the truck control the throttle and brakes (but not the steering). The truck's mpg readout is showing 12 mpg, but EPA fuel economy values are expected to range from 19 to 21 mpg combined.

Hour 5 Having now switched to an SR5, I bounce around in the cab more on worn dirt roads. Tire roar is less pronounced than in the TRD Off-Road on concrete.

Hour 6 The elephant in the room is clearly tethered to the GMC Canyon and Chevrolet Colorado. Toyota proudly says it owns the existing small-pickup market, which is true by the sales barometer. Now that the truck group's heaviest hitters are revamped and re-energized, though, we're sure the looming comparison test will be one of galactic proportions. ■

2016 Toyota Tacoma

BASE PRICE RANGE	\$24,200-\$38,720
VEHICLE LAYOUT	Front-engine, RWD/4WD, 4-5-pass, 2+2 or 4-door pickup
ENGINES	2.7L/159-hp/180-lb-ft DOHC 16-valve I-4; 3.5L/278-hp/265-lb-ft Atkinson-cycle DOHC 24-valve V-6
TRANSMISSIONS	5- or 6-speed manual; 6-speed automatic
CURB WEIGHT	4,000-4,500 lb (mfr)
WHEELBASE	127.4-140.6 in
L X W X H	212.3-225.5 x 74.4-75.2 x 70.6 in
0-60 MPH	7.0-8.5 sec (MT est)
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB FUEL ECON	17-19/21-24/19-21 mpg (est)
ENERGY CONSUMPTION, CITY/HWY	177-198/140-160 kW-hrs/100 miles (est)
CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB	0.93-1.04 lb/mile (est)
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THE 21ST- CENTURY GRAND TOURER

ULTRA-LUXE SUV CAN SCALE A MOUNTAIN
OR TOP 170 MPH WITHOUT BREAKING A SWEAT

Words Angus MacKenzie





There's a gap in the trees on the right-hand side of the trail, beyond it a sheet of rock falling steeply away from us, stepped and creased and made slick by the light rain. We tiptoe gently over the edge, and point the nose down the hill. It's so slippery we're advised to disengage the hill descent control and inch down on the brake, toes feeling for grip all the way. Every so often there's a sickening lurch as gravity overcomes the tenacious traction of the big Pirelli Scorpion tires, and the occasional crunch of metal on rock as topography triumphs over technology. But we make it down.

That's the good news. The bad news is they now want us to go back up. One of the test drivers shows us how it's done, deftly horsing the big SUV up the rock ledges. Once over the worst of them, though, there's little opportunity for finesse in the treacherous conditions: Titanic torque and a ton of horsepower get the job done. All four wheels spinning, almost

\$200,000 worth of leather-lined, wood-trimmed Bentley scrabbles over the lip and back onto the trail. Yes, that's right. Bentley.

The 2017 Bentley Bentayga is a truly extraordinary beast—a 12-cylinder, ultra-luxe SUV with a claimed top speed in excess of 170 mph, and the off-road chops to take it places few, if any, buyers will ever dare travel. It is an extremely accomplished SUV from a brand that has never built an SUV before.

Being a part of the giant VW Group gave the Bentley team plenty to work with when



developing the Bentayga. It's built on the PL73 version of VW's MLB (longitudinal front-engine, all-wheel drive) platform architecture that also underpins the new Audi Q7. However, the Bentley gets its own suspension and brakes (the brakes will later be shared with the next-gen Porsche Cayenne) and debuts the group's new 6.0-liter W-12 engine.

The EXP 9 F concept unveiled at the 2012 Geneva show was an exercise in nouveau bling that's been dialed well back for the production Bentayga. The front end is much more restrained, sharing much more design DNA with the Continental GT and Flying Spur. Careful surfacing of the front corners takes your eye away from the long front overhang that's an unavoidable side effect of using the MLB architecture.

The interior is beautifully executed and rich in signature Bentley cues such as quilted leather and knurled metal. Attention to detail is impressive, from ultra-thin chrome switchgear surrounds that are carefully





placed to sit within 0.1mm of the wood veneers to the etched speaker covers that look like woven metal. Four- and five-seat versions of the SUV will be offered, along with a choice of nine wood veneers.

The all-new W-12 shares basic architectural elements such as bore spacing with the outgoing engine, but it is 66 pounds lighter and features port and direct-injection to help it meet emissions, performance, drivability, and cold-start targets. The twin-scroll turbochargers are integrated into the exhaust

manifolds, and a new oil system has been developed, with pickups that ensure good oil supply, plus suction pumps to scavenge oil from the turbochargers when the Bentayga is tilted at extreme angles.

There's an effortless, endless surge of acceleration the moment you squeeze the gas pedal. You have the option to shift the eight-speed automatic transmission manually via the steering wheel-mounted paddles, but there's really no point as there's always



an abundance of torque when you want it. On the freeway the Bentayga barrels past 100 mph like a freight train. On a winding switchback it will easily humble a Range Rover and probably humiliate a Porsche Cayenne Turbo, the standard 40/60 front/rear torque split helping it grunt hard out of the turns.

Bentley offers four on-road dynamic modes: Comfort, Bentley, Sport, and Custom. The Bentayga's killer app, however, is a trick anti-roll system that uses fast-acting 48-volt motors to twist the anti-roll bars in the opposite direction to the cornering forces, keeping the car flat through turns. It works beautifully among the switchbacks, keeping the big SUV uncannily calm and composed yet feeling remarkably agile and light on its feet. Even better, there's no negative impact on the ride.

Off-road capability these days is more the result of specialist software than specialized





MULTIPLE CHOICE Bentayga buyers can choose from a three- or two-passenger rear seat. The two-passenger version uses a pair of front seats. There's no third row available.

The Bentayga won't outperform a Jeep or a Range Rover in really rough stuff, but it will go a lot farther than you think.



hardware, which is why the Bentayga boasts 90 different ECUs, more than double the number in a Continental GT. There are four off-road modes—Snow/Wet Grass, Gravel, Mud/Ruts, and Sand/Desert—all of which vary parameters such as ride height, throttle response, traction, steering, and transmission shift protocols to optimize performance in marginal conditions. The Bentayga won't outperform a Jeep or a Range Rover in really rough stuff, but it will go a lot farther than you think. Approach and departure angles are the limiting factors; if you can get traction, there's so much torque that you don't need a low-range crawler gear.

The 2017 Bentley Bentayga is the real deal, a proper Bentley and a genuine SUV, a go-fast, go- (mostly) anywhere luxury car. A 21st-century Grand Tourer. ■

2017 Bentley Bentayga

BASE PRICE	\$200,000 (est)
VEHICLE LAYOUT	Front-engine, AWD, 4-5-pass, 4-door SUV
ENGINE	6.0L/600-hp/664-lb-ft twin-turbo DOHC 48-valve W-12
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic
CURB WEIGHT	5,350 lb (mfr)
WHEELBASE	117.8 in
L X W X H	202.4 in x 78.7 in x 68.6 in
0-60 MPH	4.0 sec (mfr est)
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB FUEL ECON	Not yet rated
ON SALE IN U.S.	Early 2016



Geländewagen



Mercedes-Benz has a reputation for overengineering its vehicles.

For example, the E63 AMG S

Wagon is capable of accelerating from 0 to 60 mph in 3.4 seconds and reaching 186 mph, yet most drivers will spend their days tooling around Beverly Hills at 2 mph; the G-Wagen was designed for military use, yet most civilians will never leave peaceful tarmac. As I found out in Switzerland,

Germany, and France, the brand-new 2016 Mercedes-Benz GLC-Class crossover is the latest in a long line of overengineered Mercedes vehicles.

Based on the C-Class sedan, the GLC is bigger than the GLK-Class that it replaces. Although the GLC is larger, Mercedes says it's more than 100 pounds lighter than the GLK. It's more efficient, too, thanks to a more aerodynamic design, a nine-speed

automatic transmission, and a wide variety of fuel-sipping four-cylinder powerplants. American buyers will ultimately be able to choose from three engines: the base GLC300 and its 241-hp, 2.0-liter, turbocharged I-4; the GLC300d with its 2.1-liter, turbodiesel I-4 making 369 lb-ft of torque; and the GLC350e plug-in hybrid, which is powered by a 2.0-liter, turbocharged I-4 and an electric

NOT SO ROCKY START
The GLC-Class already offers go-anywhere performance, but it'll only get better with the addition of a fastback-styled "coupe" and an AMG version down the road.

2016 Mercedes-Benz GLC-Class | **FIRST DRIVE**

Lite

Words Christian Seabaugh

CROSSOVER CONTINUES M-B'S HABIT OF OVERENGINEERING





motor, a combination good for 315 hp and 413 lb-ft of torque. The gas-powered GLC300 is available with rear- or all-wheel drive, but the other two models are all-wheel drive only. Like the related C-Class plug-in hybrid, the GLC350e uses a seven-speed automatic.

I had a chance to spend some quality time with the GLC250d 4Matic (badged as the GLC300d in the U.S.) and the Euro-only GLC250 4Matic, which is identical to our GLC300, save for its 30-horsepower deficit. On the road, the GLC is as civilized as you'd expect a Mercedes to be. The cabin is quiet, the ride of our air-suspension-optioned testers was supple (steel springs are standard), and the steering feedback is generally good. Between the gas and diesel versions, I preferred the diesel. The nine-speed pairs perfectly with the low-revving diesel, and the Mercedes-designed transmission always seems ready to make the most of the engine's powerband. The GLC250d is clearly geared for city driving but was equally at home on the autobahn—it merged onto unrestricted sections happily at triple-digit speeds.

The gas version is pretty good, too. The turbo-four revs nicely without sounding thrashy and was plenty powerful around town. Americans will be well-served by the GLC300's extra 30 horsepower, as the GLC250 runs out of steam quickly at freeway speeds.

I also had the opportunity to briefly sample the GLC350e on a 15-minute loop. My tryst left me impressed. Not only is the GLC350e designed to be efficient, but it's also sporty. It's capable of driving around 20 miles on battery power alone, can be charged from empty to full on a Level 2 charger in about

two hours, and can still hustle from 0 to 60 mph in around 5.5 seconds. The plug-in drives just as well as the gas and diesel versions, motoring along without drama on electricity and seamlessly switching on the engine when needed. The only appreciable difference is the non-linear transition from regenerative to mechanical braking.

Although most GLC buyers will never venture off the pavement, off-road prowess was nonetheless something Mercedes took seriously. Although it lacks locking diffs or a two-speed transfer case, the GLC makes up for it with electronic tuning, an air suspension, and a Europe-only (for now) off-road package. The off-road pack essentially adds U.S.-spec bumpers (which have improved

The 2016 GLC250d is at home on the autobahn—it merged happily at triple-digit speeds.

approach and departure angles), air suspension, and off-road drive modes. The GLC may seem like it has no business off-roading, but it conquered everything from a 36-degree rocky climb to sandy pits that'd pick a wheel off the ground with little difficulty. A Jeep Cherokee or Renegade Trailhawk likely would have done the same trail without breaking a sweat, but I doubt any of the GLC's competitors, save for the Evoque, could have.

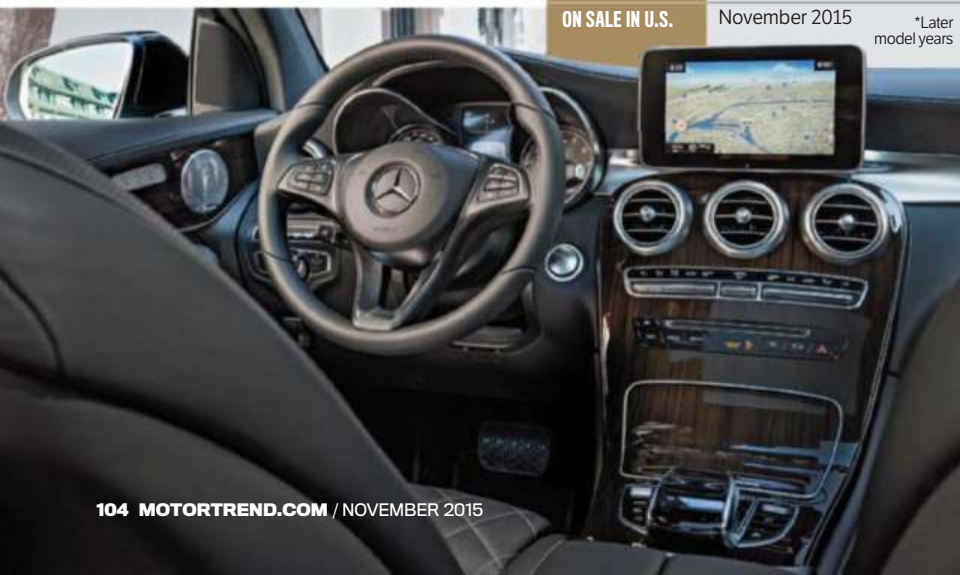
As for the rest of the GLC, it's a pretty compelling package. The interiors on our loaded test models were dead quiet and featured gorgeous wood or aluminum trim. Mercedes' latest suite of safety technology, including 360-degree cameras, radar cruise control, and a head-up display that is capable of reading road signs to you, is available.

Although overengineering might not be worth it for every vehicle, the Mercedes-Benz GLC-Class is all the better for it. Capable of cruising on electrons on the autobahn and venturing off-road, the GLC-Class will likely find favor with buyers around the world. And with more versions slated to join the family after the diesel in 2017 and the plug-in in 2018, it's easy to picture the extra engineering effort paying off. ■

2016 Mercedes-Benz GLC-Class

BASE PRICE RANGE	\$39,875-\$41,875
VEHICLE LAYOUT	Front-engine, RWD/AWD, 5-pass, 4-door SUV
ENGINES	2.0L/241-hp/273-lb-ft turbocharged DOHC 16-valve I-4; 2.1L/201-hp/369-lb-ft turbodiesel DOHC 16-valve I-4*; 2.0L turbocharged DOHC 16-valve I-4 plus electric motor; 315 hp/413 lb-ft comb*
TRANSMISSIONS	9-speed automatic; 7-speed automatic*
CURB WEIGHT	3,650-3,850 lb (est)
WHEELBASE	113.1 in
L X W X H	183.3 x 74.4 x 64.5-66.3 in
0-62 MPH	6.8-7.0 sec (MT est)
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB FUEL ECON	Not yet rated
ON SALE IN U.S.	November 2015

*Later model years



QUIET LUXURY The GLC-Class' silent interior features gorgeous wood or aluminum trim, supple leather, and comfortable seats. Passengers both front and back will enjoy the extra leg- and shoulder room and trunk space.

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Words Motor Trend Editors



ARRIVAL 2015 Mercedes-Benz CLA250 4Matic Chris Clonts



"The 2015 M-B CLA250 is beautiful, polarizing, and menacing, depending on where the camera is." @CClonts

EPA CITY/HWY/COMB FUEL ECON
 24/33/27 MPG **BASE PRICE** \$34,425
PRICE AS TESTED \$46,140

Before the Mercedes-Benz CLA250 was introduced, it would have been an understatement to say that auto writers were skeptical of the compact sedan with polarizing styling and "wrong-wheel drive."

But consumers, to put it mildly, were not skeptical. Two years after it went on sale in the U.S., the CLA-Class has been a rousing success, with sales eventually settling at 2,500 to 3,000 cars a month. In the no-longer-skeptical column is MT technical director Frank Markus, who said the CLA was more playful than expected. "GTI-like," he said. This is the first time with our hands on the all-wheel-drive version, so we look forward to seeing if it improves on the front-drive CLA250 we tested last year. That car ran to 60 mph in 6.3 seconds

and hit the quarter-mile mark in 14.9 seconds — just as this one did. Our 2015 long-term, with a base price of \$33,500 (and \$925 destination charge), is a real looker in Cirrus White. The interior upholstery is black MB-Tex (high-quality vinyl) with Dinamica faux suede inserts. The Sport Plus package (\$3,900) adds AMG body styling, racy red accent lines on both bumpers, and red

calipers on the brakes, which get perforated discs to stop the 18-inch AMG wheels and Continental ContiSportContact 5P tires. Inside, the package adds a flat-bottom steering wheel and some premium trim.

The CLA250 is powered by a 208-hp, 258-lb-ft turbo inline-four. Power runs through a seven-speed DCT. It comes standard with auto stop/start, collision



The Sport package includes red accents, well, everywhere in the interior. It's hard to feel blasé when buckling a race-red seatbelt.

UPDATE CHEVROLET COLORADO Z71	UPDATE CHEVROLET CORVETTE	CHEVROLET TAHOE LT	HONDA ACCORD HYBRID TOURING	UPDATE HONDA CR-V TOURING AWD	HONDA FIT	JEEP CHEROKEE TRAILHAWK	KIA SOUL
KIA SOUL EV+	LAND ROVER RANGE ROVER SPORT SC	MERCEDES-BENZ CLA250 4MATIC ARRIVAL	NISSAN VERSA NOTE UPDATE	RAM 1500 ECODIESEL	SUBARU WRX STI	VOLKSWAGEN GTI	VOLVO V60

RIDE ALONG FOR UPDATES ON OUR LONG-TERM FLEET

SPECS 2015 Mercedes-Benz CLA250 4Matic

PAUL LAGUETTE



CO2 emissions 0.71 lb/mi

MT figure eight

25.6 sec @ 0.75 avg g

6.3 sec
0-60 mph

14.9 sec @ 92.6 mph
Quarter mile

108 ft
Braking distance, 60-0 mph

Vehicle Layout Front-engine, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan

Engine 2.0L/208-hp/258-lb-ft turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4

Transmission 7-speed twin-clutch auto.

Curb Weight 3,493 lb (60/40% f/r)

Energy Cons, City/Hwy 140/102 kW-hrs/100 miles

prevention assist, and attention assist. An additional \$550 got us blind-spot assist, and the panoramic sunroof was \$1,480. Xenon headlights and LED taillights were \$850.

The \$2,300 Premium package brought premium audio and some other bits. The Multimedia package brings in the COMAND infotainment system with navigation, a rearview camera, an 8-inch screen, and voice control.

The total MSRP on our CLA250 4Matic is \$46,140.

We particularly look forward to seeing if the AWD system enhances handling on local canyon roads as it did on our figure-eight test, and whether it's a safety feature in the rain, should we ever have any. And I'd love to throw some winter tires on and head up to Montana ski country this winter. Come on, bossman Ed—the white-on-white photos would be worth it!



2015 Chevrolet Colorado Z71 Scott Burgess



"Halfway through our Colorado test period and she keeps chugging along."
@autocritic

Service life / 6 mo/14,461 mi

Avg CO2 / 1.02 lb/mi

Energy cons / 177 kW-hrs/100 mi

Unresolved problems / None

Maintenance cost / \$0 (oil change, inspection, tire rotation)

Normal-wear cost / \$0

Base price / \$34,990

As tested / \$37,265

AVG MPG FUEL ECON 19.0 MPG comb.

This summer, our 2015 Chevrolet

Colorado has been put to work taking on heavy-duty tasks instead of its more suburban responsibilities.

Frank Markus, *Motor Trend's* technical director, hauled gravel with the Colorado to lay a driveway at a summer retreat on Lake Huron. The driveway needed 11 tons of rock.

He noted that the tow/haul function "really helps the truck shoulder larger loads, provides useful upshift delays, advances downshifts when slowing, and generally makes the truck work more efficiently."

Markus did wonder why the Colorado didn't automatically switch to tow/haul mode as soon as the trailer connects to the truck via the seven-pin connector. The engine will certainly sense that it's working harder than usual, and it knows that something has just connected to it.

During Markus' gravel runs, he attached a 2,800-pound dump trailer filled with 2 tons of gravel (to stay under the pickup's 7,000-pound towing limit).

Towing at max weight, the Colorado worked hard to get up to speed, but,

Markus said, it did so in a safe manner and didn't take too long. Finally, he said that there was a considerable dip in fuel economy with the instantaneous econ reading of around 11.5 mpg while cruising. That should not be unexpected, and results from that particular tank of fuel showed the Colorado averaging 10.4 mpg.

Although a bigger truck may have allowed Markus to take one or two fewer trips, the Colorado was no worse for wear. In just six months, we've hit 15,000 miles in our Colorado, and it still feels like new.



Frank Markus used the Colorado for cleaning up and improving the driveway to his new cottage.



We took advantage of South Bay BMW's free flatbed vehicle return policy. They sent a flatbed tow truck to drop off our BMW and pick up the loaner we borrowed—très convenient.

2015 BMW M3 Edward Loh



“Optional \$8,150 carbon-ceramic brakes are not for a daily-driven @BMW #M3!” @edloh

Service life / 11 mo/25,906 mi
Avg CO2 / 0.96 lb/mi
Energy cons / 166 kW-hrs/100 mi
Unresolved problems / Front brake judder
Maintenance cost / \$0 (2-oil change, inspection; 1-cabin air filter)
Normal-wear cost / \$0
Base price / \$62,925 **As tested** / \$78,125

AVERAGE MPG FUEL ECON 20.3 MPG comb.

With 24,816 miles on the clock, the M3 was due for another service—likely the last one before the car goes back and thus the last time we'd be able to address the recurring brake problem. In update No. 3 I noted the M3 had picked up an occasional audible clunk from the front right wheel, typically heard when turning left at low speeds. At the time, I was told a “client road test with shop foreman” was recommended but that the carbon-ceramic brakes were “operating as designed.”

That was 13,000 miles ago, and the problems

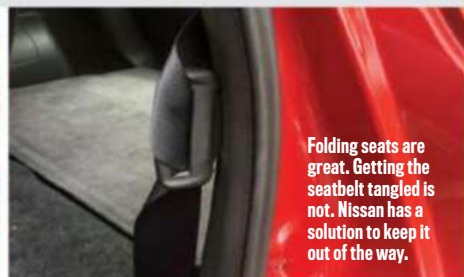
with the brakes have gotten worse. There is now a high-pitched grinding noise heard primarily from the front brakes. It doesn't happen all the time, and yes, I'm aware this is a common complaint about carbon ceramics that can be temperature-related. Even more troubling is the pedal feel. Even after the brakes have heat in them, there is a grating/granular feel that comes up through the brake pedal that is not confi-

dence-inspiring. And the clunking brake judder? It feels like the front brake rotor is loose and contacts the face of the brake pad when the car turns.

To be fair, none of the noise or sensations appears to negatively affect the BMW's braking performance. The M3 stops incredibly short; in fact it's one of the car's best party tricks. Still, I had to know more, so after requesting the scheduled oil change, I updated the service writer who immediately scheduled a ride-along with Craig, South Bay BMW's lead technician. Naturally, with the head mechanic along for the ride, I couldn't get the brakes to squeal or grate but did manage a judder.

It didn't really matter, however, because Craig believed me; after all, he's heard it all before. The first two issues, he calmly explained, are annoying but known characteristics of carbon-ceramic brakes. “We get a lot of complaints about them,” Craig said, “which we've asked [BMW] corporate to address, but they tell us to say the same thing: It's normal.” He was more curious about the juddering while turning but thought it emanated from the rear brakes, not the front. We argued for a bit, but he agreed to double-check to see if anything is amiss.

I left the dealership in a 320i loaner. The following day, the dealership called and said the M3 was ready. The 32-point inspection revealed no other issues, and the oil was changed without incident (or charge, per the warranty). The more frustrating news was that all brake issues are apparently within normal operating parameters.



The Note's fold-flat seats grant a decent amount of cargo room but not enough for four extra-large boxes.

Folding seats are great. Getting the seatbelt tangled is not. Nissan has a solution to keep it out of the way.

2015 Nissan Versa Note SR Alex Nishimoto



“What the Note lacks in fun, it makes up for in practicality, with decent cargo room.” @MT_NishiMOTOR

Service life / 12 mo/16,199 mi
Avg CO2 / 0.61 lb/mi
Energy cons / 106 kW-hrs/100 mi
Unresolved problems / None
Maintenance cost / \$288.27 (3-oil change, inspection, tire rotation; 1-cabin air filter, engine air filter)
Normal-wear cost / \$0
Base price / \$18,340 **As tested** / \$19,180

REAL MPG FUEL ECON 31.7 MPG comb.

The Nissan Versa Note is quickly racking up miles, having recently passed the 15,000-mile mark. With that came another visit to the dealer for some routine maintenance, just the third scheduled visit so far; driving the Versa Note has been smooth sailing. Smooth but also pretty dull.

The Note's 15,000-mile service calls for an inspection, oil change, tire rotation, and air and cabin filter change. I also asked the service adviser to check out an annoying squeak, which is usually audible even at slow speeds and sounds like it

originates from the driver-side door. The technicians were unable to replicate the noise, however.

Two staffers were able to get behind the wheel recently, and they both echoed my past gripes. Copy chief Emiliana Sandoval said, “The CVT whines ceaselessly,” and thanks to the lack of thrust, she found herself “saying a little prayer when merging onto the highway.” Associate online editor Stefan Ogbac also had

some complaints about the Note's 109 hp. “The little 1.6-liter I-4 is fine with one person,” he said, “but it does struggle when carrying a full load of passengers—especially on the highway.” Ogbac also found the Note less cargo-capable than the first-gen Versa hatchback he used to own. “I tried fitting four large boxes in the car and got three in with the seats folded and the Divide-N-Hide false floor in its lowest position.”

But if you don't need to transport that much stuff, the fold-flat seats grant a fair amount of room. I also like how easy it is to drop the rear seats. A pull on the knob that tops the seats is all it takes to bring them forward. It has a place to stow the seatbelts so they don't get tangled when you fold the seats back up. In some other cars with fold-flat rear seats, I inevitably get at least one shoulder belt caught behind the latch. Nissan's solution is simple. In the trim next to the doorframe, there's a slot where the male end of the seat belt can go. This keeps it out of the way, so when you raise the seats again, it can easily be restored to its original position.



2015 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Christian Seabaugh



“The only way the 'Vette could be more practical is if it had a pickup bed. Wait ... that'd actually be pretty cool, wouldn't it?” @C_Seabaugh

Service life / 4 mo/7,859 mi
Avg CO2 / 0.88 lb/mi
Energy cons / 152 kW-hrs/100 mi
Unresolved problems / None
Maintenance cost / \$0 (oil change, inspection, tire rotation)
Normal-wear cost / \$0
Base price / \$55,995 **As tested** / \$64,880

REAL MPG FUEL ECON 22.1 MPG comb.

The purchase of a sports car such as our 2015 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray is often more of an emotional decision than a rational one. The few buyers who opt for two-door sports cars buy them because of the sounds they make, the looks they generate, and the speeds they can attain instead of, say, practicality. But the thing is, a sports car, especially a Corvette, can be practical.

With my wedding fast approaching and my bride in full DIY swing, MT's mailroom has been flooded with boxes full of wedding stuff. But without asking

to borrow a co-worker's SUV, how was I to get the boxes home? It turns out the Stingray's hatchback and large cargo area allow it to swallow up loads more cargo than one would expect. Outside of postal duties, the Corvette's cargo area has had no trouble carrying day-to-day items such as groceries, luggage, or even my hockey bag. Quite impressive stuff for an "impractical" two-door sports car.



2015 Audi A3 TDI Chris Walton



“We bid farewell to the 2015 Audi A3 1.8T Premium Plus sedan and say hello to the TDI Premium sedan.” @Chapter_34

Service life / 2 mo/11,278 mi
Avg CO2 / 0.61 lb/mi
Energy cons / 104 kW-hrs/100 mi
Unresolved problems / None
Maintenance cost / \$0
Normal-wear cost / \$0
Base price / \$33,495 **As tested** / \$39,195

AVG MPG FUEL ECON 36.2 MPG comb.

As you might already know, our plan with the 2015 Audi A3 is to sample three versions. Next up is the \$33,495 A3 TDI Premium. This Florett Silver (\$550) A3 is equipped with MMI Navigation Plus (\$2,600) and the Premium Plus specification (\$2,550), which includes 18-inch wheels, heated front seats and exterior mirrors, keyless entry/ignition, and aluminum window and interior trim. Total price: \$39,195.

A mere 150 hp is all the front-wheel-drive TDI has on tap, but 236 lb-ft at 1,700 rpm means it

doesn't need many revs to get up to speed. The less powerful TDI is predictably slower than the 1.8T, with a sprint to 60 mph requiring 8.2 seconds and a quarter mile passing by in 16.3 seconds at 85 mph. Grip and agility are nearly indistinguishable between the two A3s. A couple long-haul tanks helped it earn a respectable 35.9-mpg average. We've even recorded a 474-mile tank.



2015 Honda CR-V Touring AWD Zach Gale



“Crazy to think that underinflating the tires by about 7 psi results in a 3.8 percent fuel economy drop.” @zachgale

Service life / 2 mo/3,565 mi
Avg CO2 / 0.77 lb/mi
Energy cons / 134 kW-hrs/100 mi
Unresolved problems / None
Maintenance cost / \$0
Normal-wear cost / \$0
Base price / \$33,775 **As tested** / \$33,775

REAL MPG FUEL ECON 25.2 MPG comb.

The 2015 Honda CR-V is nearly untouchable when it comes to fuel efficiency—or so you'd think by its respectable 26/33 mpg city/highway EPA figures with AWD. Those EPA figures provide a good starting point to understand the CR-V's efficiency, but what happens when you use Econ mode? To find out, we tested the CR-V in a way only *Motor Trend* could.

First off, Real MPG test results fell short of the crossover's EPA ratings. At 23.0/28.8 RMPG city/highway, our loaded-with-weight-adding-content CR-V Touring was about even with a 2015 Nissan Rogue SL AWD we tested. On my CR-V, I've come to appreciate the smooth driving characteristics of the new-for-2015 CVT, but I do wish the highway mileage were a little improved.

If you want to get the most mpg out of a CR-V, engage the Econ mode. Although the CR-V is livelier with it turned off, the crossover doesn't feel like a slug with it on. And as a bonus, the CR-V improved from 23.0/28.8 RMPG with Econ off to 24.5/30.7 RMPG with Econ on, or an improvement of about 7 percent in city driving and on the highway. It's a good trade-off.





2014 Passat Sport 1.8T Emiliana Sandoval



“Generous back-seat legroom, a peppy new engine, and classic styling make the Passat a solid choice.”
@Emiliana505

When the Volkswagen Passat got redesigned for model year 2012, we were so impressed with the larger, American-market-focused VeeDub that we named it our Car of the Year. Two years later, the Passat is essentially the same Chattanooga-crafted B7-generation car but with a new turbo engine. How is the family-friendly sedan holding up? Quite well, and the new engine is icing on the cake.

We chose to spend our 13 months of commuting and road-tripping with the Sport Edition, a new-for-2014 trim that slots below the 1.8T SEL Premium.

Service life / 13 mo / 17,438 mi
Base price / \$28,495
Options / MojoMats, trunk liner, and CarGo storage blocks (\$235)
Price as tested / \$28,730
Avg fuel econ/CO2 / 27.0 mpg/0.72 lb/mi
Problem areas / Tire pressure monitor alert
Maintenance cost / \$0 (oil change, inspection, tire rotation)
Normal-wear cost / \$0
3-year residual value* / \$12,929
Recalls / Transmission fluid cooler O-rings, engine fuel-delivery rail

REAL MPG CITY/HWY/COMB FUEL ECON
25.0/35.4/28.8 MPG

*Automotive Lease Guide data



The new Sport Edition's stylistic touches include a contrasting black roof and Luxor alloy wheels.



The Sport-iness is mostly cosmetic—there isn't a new sport suspension or stiffer anti-roll bars or sportier gearing. The trim comes standard with Candy White exterior paint with a contrasting black roof; foglights with low-speed corner illumination; stainless steel pedal covers made to look like brushed aluminum; V-Tex leatherette seating surfaces (it's vegan!); heated front seats; leather-wrapped steering wheel, shift knob, and brake lever (not vegan); heated side mirrors; a rear spoiler; and 19-inch Luxor alloy wheels with all-season tires, among other features. The only option box we checked was for a set of heavy-duty MojoMats, which would be useful in the muddy Snow Belt but remained unused in the trunk, and a heavy-duty trunkliner with CarGo blocks that stick to the fuzzy trunk floor to keep groceries and other cargo from sliding around. Cost for the mats and blocks: \$235.

Now for what you really want to know, judging from Interweb comments: How is the new engine? VW replaced the 2013's 2.5-liter inline-five, which made 170 hp and 177 lb-ft, with a 1.8-liter, turbo-charged, direct-injection four-cylinder making the same horsepower and 7 additional lb-ft of torque. Our 2012 COTY Passat with the old engine clocked a 9.0-second 0-60 time, and the 2014 Sport nailed it in 7.9 seconds. Then and now, quarter-mile times were 16.8 seconds at 83.8 mph and 16.0 seconds at 87.3—plenty quick for everyday, around-town driving. The 1.8T's two available transmissions are a five-speed manual and a six-speed auto with



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The Passat's interior design is tasteful and understated, with faux carbon-fiber accents and easy-to-read graphics. Two-toned seats lend a sporty air.

Tiptronic paddle shifters and Sport mode, and that's the one we got.

The peppy engine pulls strongly enough to make at-speed highway merging effortless. The throttle response is solid, with barely any hesitation, the steering is nicely responsive, and the Passat corners decently for a midsize sedan. I always drove it in Sport mode, where it more accurately mimicked how I'd shift if I were driving a manual and chose the appropriate gear more quickly, as it tended to hunt a bit in the lower gears in regular mode. There are paddle shifters if you're so inclined, but I rarely used them. There was a surprisingly pleasurable growl at the power peak (4,800 rpm), but the road noise within the cabin was 20 percent too loud in my estimation. Sometimes when exiting the freeway downhill to my street, I thought I had a back window open—the din was that obvious.

Everyone who drove the Passat made note of its grabby brakes. To get the engine to start you had to forcefully smooch the brake down, yet when it was in motion, the lightest tap sent all 3,309 pounds of car pitching to an abrupt halt, the pedal hesitating a bit on the floor before releasing back up. Associate online editor Alex Nishimoto took the VW on a road trip to Utah and noted: "You get used to the brake feel eventually, but if you get into another car and come back, it takes time to find the pedal's sweet spot again. Also, the brakes squeal when cold." The brakes never felt unsafe, though, just lurchy. I drove our long-term GTI home one night to compare its brakes, and while they were on the touchy side, they were nowhere near as prickly.

Our 2012 COTY story lauded the exterior design as tasteful, restrained, and subtle, and that description still holds. It's like a white button-down

It's like a white button-down shirt—not flashy but classic and appropriate for almost any occasion.

shirt—not flashy but classic and appropriate for almost any occasion. Is it eye-catchingly exciting? No, but the Passat is due for a refresh, so perhaps it'll get snazzed up then. The interior design is also clean and classy, with good placement of knobs and buttons. I would've preferred a sunroof, push-button start, and a navigation system, but those aren't options on the Sport trim level. The Sport does have a standard reverse camera (it's a \$695 add-on for the non-Sport-model 1.8T and the Wolfsburg edition, standard on the SE and SEL Premium). The Bluetooth connection for my iPhone worked very well, never once cutting out or unpairing itself. I disliked that the charger provided was for an iPhone 5 or newer, as I have a 4, and that the cord was short, meaning I had to keep the phone tucked away inside the center console if I



wanted to charge it. The 5-inch color touchscreen is a good one, responding quickly to finger taps and displaying information in a sans serif typeface that was large enough to read easily at a glance. The Passat came standard with six months of Car-Net, a system that has automatic crash notification if an airbag is deployed, provides access to VW's Emergency Response Center via an SOS button, and summons roadside assistance via a wrench icon button. I didn't need any of that, thankfully.

The Passat's interior roominess is a huge plus, as families usually come with baggage. With 15.9 cubic feet of cargo room, the trunk is a smidge roomier than the trunk in the Honda Accord. I was able to fit the unboxed components for an Ikea couch in the trunk and back seat with room to spare, and the split-folding rear seats adjust the capacity to your cargo. The back seat is limolike, making the Passat the ride of choice for many MT staff lunch trips. Copy editor Jesse Bishop even slept on it for a couple nights after a tent mishap and said it wasn't bad once he found a comfortable position. I enjoyed the driver's seat, especially the adjustable lumbar support, but disliked that there was no memory function to save my seating position, as I'm short and have to make a lot of tweaks to get comfortable.

The 18.5-gallon fuel tank takes regular gasoline—praise be. Nishimoto and I both saw around 500 miles per tank on our western road trips. The

I initially scoffed at the CarGo blocks, which stick to the trunk floor to keep cargo from sliding around, but they ended up being very useful. As for back-seat legroom, our tallest staffer (6'4") had plenty of it.



Sport is EPA rated at 24/34/28, and our Real MPG testing came in at an overall 28.8 mpg. (The 2.5-liter automatic was EPA rated at 22/31/25.)

VW advises the first service visit at 10,000 miles, and 2014 VWs fall under the Carefree Maintenance program, which comps all routine maintenance for two years and 20,000 miles. The Passat made only one uneventful dealership visit in its time with us, for its 10K oil change, inspection, and tire rotation. For the 2015 model year the program changed to only

the 12 months/10,000 miles visit; Passat consumers can purchase Volkswagen Care coverage for \$149 that covers the 2 year/20,000 and 3 year/30,000 maintenance visits or add the 4 year/40,000 and 5 year/50,000 visits with Volkswagen Care Plus for \$569. The maintenance costs for our long-term 2014 Mazda6 came in at \$178.96 for two visits, and our long-term 2013 Nissan Altima 2.5L SL totaled \$204.92 for two services. Our 2013 Honda Accord Sport required \$209.42 for two visits.

I did have one electronic glitch—three times during 100-plus-degree weather the tire pressure alert came on even though the tires were at the right pressure—but by the time the service visit took place, it had stopped.

On the family-hauling front, or for hauling stuff in general, the Passat still gets good grades, and the new engine earns it extra credit until the refresh. ■



2014 Volkswagen Passat Sport

POWERTRAIN/CHASSIS

DRIVETRAIN LAYOUT	Front-engine, FWD
ENGINE TYPE	Turbocharged I-4, iron block/alum head
VALVETRAIN	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl
DISPLACEMENT	109.7 cu in/1,798cc
COMPRESSION RATIO	9.6:1
POWER (SAE NET)	170 hp @ 4,800 rpm
TORQUE (SAE NET)	184 lb-ft @ 1,500 rpm
REDLINE	6,000 rpm
WEIGHT TO POWER	19.5 lb/hp
TRANSMISSION	6-speed automatic
AXLE/FINAL-DRIVE RATIO	3.87:1/2.59:1
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	Struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar
STEERING RATIO	16.4:1
TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	3.0
BRAKES, F;R	12.3-in vented disc; 10.7-in disc, ABS
WHEELS	8.0 x 19-in, cast aluminum
TIRES	235/40R19 92H M+S Continental ContiProContact

DIMENSIONS

WHEELBASE	110.0 in
TRACK, F/R	62.1/61.0 in
LENGTH X WIDTH X HEIGHT	191.6 x 72.2 x 58.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	36.4 ft
CURB WEIGHT	3,309 lb
WEIGHT DIST, F/R	59/41%
SEATING CAPACITY	5
HEADROOM, F/R	38.3/37.8 in
LEGROOM, F/R	42.4/39.1 in
SHOULDER ROOM, F/R	56.9/57.0 in
CARGO VOLUME	15.9 cu ft

TEST DATA

ACCELERATION TO MPH	
0-30	2.5 sec
0-40	4.0
0-50	5.6
0-60	7.9
0-70	10.5
0-80	13.4
0-90	17.0
PASSING, 45-65 MPH	4.4
QUARTER MILE	16.0 sec @ 87.3 mph
BRAKING, 60-0 MPH	118 ft
LATERAL ACCELERATION	0.85 g (avg)
MT FIGURE EIGHT	27.0 sec @ 0.64 g (avg)
TOP-GEAR REVS @ 60 MPH	2,050 rpm

CONSUMER INFO

STABILITY/TRACTION CONTROL	Yes/yes
AIRBAGS	Dual front, front side, f/r curtain
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE	3 yrs/36,000 miles
FUEL CAPACITY	18.5 gal
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB ECON	24/34/28 mpg
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY/COMB	140/99 kW-hrs/100 miles
CO2 EMISSIONS	0.70 lb/mile
REAL MPG, CITY/HWY/COMB	25.0/35.4/28.8 mpg
RECOMMENDED FUEL	Unleaded regular

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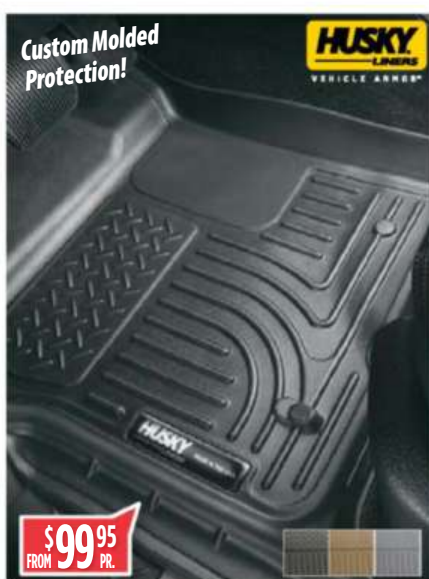
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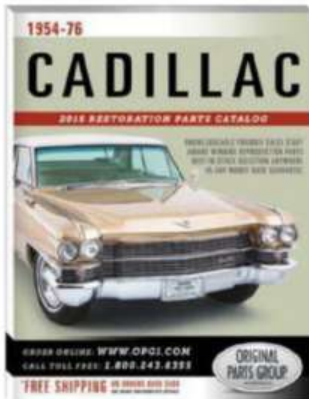
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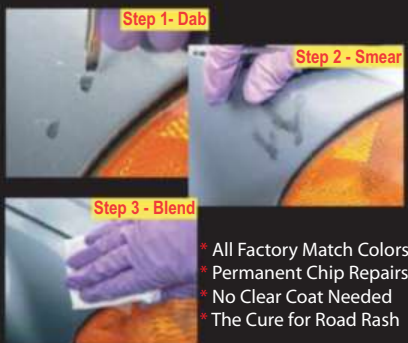
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In most cars with adjustable suspension settings the first thing I do is switch to Sport mode.

But not in the new Mercedes-Maybach S600. Oh, I tried it, and it's not bad, but the Comfort setting is much better. More appropriate. The Maybach, you see, is a luxury limousine, and in Comfort mode it actually rides like one. In fact, it might be the best-riding car in the world right now, possibly better, even, than the Rolls-Royce Phantom, though I'd want to drive them back-to-back over the same roads before making a definitive call.

The Mercedes-Maybach S600 is big, powerful, and costs a lot of money. You can quibble about the form—both the Rolls-Royce Phantom and the Bentley Mulsanne are unquestionably more charismatic and distinctive designs than the Maybach's supersized S-Class meme—but in purely functional terms the big-daddy Mercedes is arguably the more accomplished car.

Under the hood is a magnificent 6.0-liter, twin-turbo V-12, a detuned version of the M275 AMG engine that delivers 523 hp and 612 lb-ft and is matched to a beautifully calibrated seven-speed automatic. Like all great V-12s the engine is turbine-smooth right through the rev range, the twin-turbos helping deliver maximum torque from just 1,900 rpm. For those who care, the Maybach S600 nails 60 mph in 4.8 seconds, and the quarter mile in 13.2 seconds at 110.9 mph, which means it's quicker than a Bentley Mulsanne Speed. It's also eight-tenths of a second quicker around our figure eight than the hulking Bentley.



MAYBACH S600

I've come to the conclusion that "luxury" has become a cruelly debased term in the modern automotive lexicon.

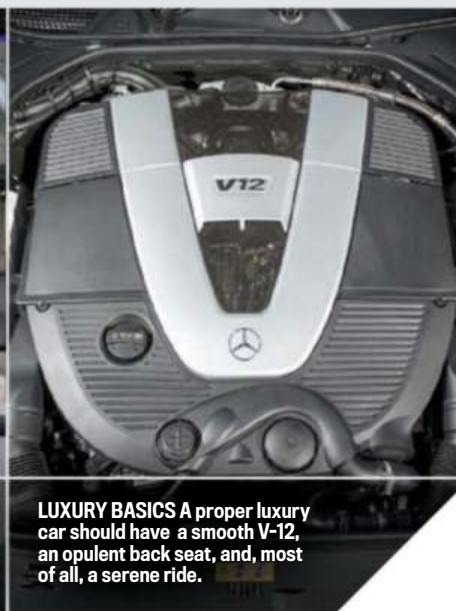
Mercedes offers the choice of Comfort and Sport transmission modes, and in Comfort the Maybach will ooze away from a standstill in second gear, just like Benzes always used to. Switching to Sport mode makes the tranny more alert and responsive; more than you need it to be in the 'burbs but perfect for rapidly majestic transport along a twisting two-lane. There are steering wheel paddles if you want to swap ratios yourself, but in truth they are superfluous. Start hustling the Maybach and the transmission delivers perfectly timed, rev-matched downshifts on the entry into corners.

It was during a brisk, uninterrupted run along Route 198, part of which we use as our Best Driver's Car test road, that the Maybach made

its mark. I left the suspension in Comfort and marveled at the quality of the ride, the dexterity of the body control, and the truly surprising pace at which the almost 18-foot, 5,308-pound limousine waltzed effortlessly down this demanding stretch of tarmac. The Maybach's demeanor through the swoops and sweeps, humps and hollows reminded me of an old Series III Jaguar XJ12—minus, of course, all the rubbery lateral compliance in the suspension that made the Jag interesting through fast sweepers. There was a graceful elegance to it all that I realized with a jolt is now missing from many of today's over-tired and tautly damped modern luxury cars, cars that should probably more correctly be called sport sedans. The Maybach's combination of speed and serenity is unique.

Maybe it's because I happened to drive the Maybach from L.A. to the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, where massive, glittering Duesenbergs and Isotta Fraschinis and Packards and Hispano-Suizas recalled a gilded age of automotive excess, but I've come to the conclusion that "luxury" has become a cruelly debased term in the modern automotive lexicon. There are fast cars, powerful cars, imposing cars, stylish cars, and great handling cars, many of them superbly designed and engineered and carrying a hefty price tag that puts them beyond the reach of the average consumer. But that doesn't mean they are luxurious. It means they are expensive.

Effortlessly fast and smooth and quiet and comfortable, the Maybach cossets you, cocoons you, indulges you. It is a luxury car. ■



LUXURY BASICS A proper luxury car should have a smooth V-12, an opulent back seat, and, most of all, a serene ride.

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